

# THE HUMAN BOY



EDEN PHILLPOTTS



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# THE HUMAN BOY

BY

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

AUTHOR OF "CHILDREN OF THE MIST"  
"FOLLY AND FRESH AIR" ETC.



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

NEW YORK AND LONDON

PR

5177

H8



TO

PHILLPOTTS "MINOR"

AS A TRIFLING TRIBUTE OF FRATERNAL REGARD  
AND IN GREEN AND GRATEFUL MEMORY OF

OUR HAPPY BOYHOOD



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# The Human Boy



## The Artfulness of Steggles

### I

I REMEMBER the very evening he came to Merivale. "Nubby" Tomkins had a cold on his chest, so Mathers and I stopped in from the half-hour "kick-about" in the playground before tea, being chums of Nubby's. Whenever he gets a cold on the chest he thinks he is going to die, and this evening, sitting by the fire in the Fifth's class-room, he roasted chestnuts for Mathers and me, and took a very gloomy view of his future life.

"As you know," he said, "I hate being out of doors excepting when I can lie about in hay. And to make me go out walking in all weathers, as they do here, is simply murder. I know what'll be the end of it. I shall get bacilluses or microbes into

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some important part of me, and die. It's like those books the Doctor reads to the kids on Sundays, with choir-boys in them. The little brutes sing like angels, and their voices go echoing to the top of cathedrals, and make people blub about in the pews. Then they get microbes on the chest, and kick. You know the only thing I can do is to sing ; and I shall die as sure as mud."

Nubby was a corker at singing. He had all the solos in the chapel to himself, and people came miles to hear him.

"You won't die," said Mathers. "You don't give your money away to the poor, or help blind people across roads, and all that. Your voice'll crack, and you'll live."

"I wish it would," said Nubby; "I should feel a lot safer."

"Mine," continued Mathers, "cracked when my mustache came."

We looked at him as he patted it. Mathers was going next term. He had more mustache than, at least, two of the under-masters, and once he let Nubby stroke it, and Nubby said he could feel it distinctly under the hand.



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“That’s what’s done it with M.,” said Nubby, looking at Mathers and opening another gloomy subject.

Mathers got redder, and began peeling a chestnut.

“I wish I was as certain as you,” he said.

“None of us can be certain,” I said; “but if your voice did go, Nubbs, you’d be out of the hunt for one.”

“I am,” declared Nubby. “Last time I had a cold in the throat she sent me a little bunch of grapes by Jane, and a packet of black currant lozenges; but this time, though the attack is on my chest, and I may die, she hasn’t sent a thing.”

“Perhaps she doesn’t know.”

“She does. I met her going into the library yesterday, and I doubled up and barked like a dog, and she never even said she was sorry. It lies between you two chaps now.”

“I believe you are going strongest just at present,” said Mathers, critically, to me. “You came off last Wednesday and kicked two goals on your own, and she said afterwards to Browne that she never saw you

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play a bigger game. Then that little beast—Browne, I mean—sniggered, and made that noise in his throat, like a sprung bat, and said he was quite glad he hadn't kept you in. That's how he shows M. what a gulf there is even between the Fifth and masters."

"The bigger the gulf the better," I said. "It would be rough on a decent worm to put it second to Browne. In my opinion even a Double-First would be nothing if he wore salmon-colored ties and elastic-sided boots; and Browne isn't a Double-First by long chalks. He can only teach the kids, and his desk is well known to be crammed with cribs of every kind."

In the matter of M., I may say at once that she was Milly, Doctor Denham's youngest daughter—twelve and a half, fair, blue eyes, and jolly difficult to please. Somehow the Fifth always drew her most. The Sixth were feeble beggars at that time. Two of the ten wore spectacles, and one was going out to Africa as a missionary, and used to treat the Fifth's class-room as a sort of training-ground for preaching and doing good. He was called

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Fulcher, and the spirit was willing in him, but the flesh was flabby. We used to assegai him with stumps, and pretend to scalp him and boil him and eat him. He said he should glory in martyrdom really ; and Nubbs, who knows a good deal about eating, used to write recipes for cooking Fulcher, and post them to imaginary African kings. But I should think that to be merely eaten is not martyrdom, properly speaking. If it is, then everything we eat, down to periwinkles, must be martyrs ; which is absurd, like Euclid says.

Well, it got to be a settled idea at Merivale that M. cared, in a sort of vague way, for either Nubby, or Mathers, or me, or all of us. The situation was too uncertain for anything like real jealousy among us ; besides, we were chums, and had no objection to going shares in M.'s regard. At football Mathers and I fought like demons for Merivale and for M.'s good word ; but any impression we might make was generally swept away in chapel by Nubby when Sunday came. He could sing, mind you. It was like cold water down your spine, and all from printed music. Besides, he could be

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ill, which gave him a pull over Mathers and me, who couldn't. To look at, Nubby was nothing. He had big limbs, but they were soft as sausages. If you punched him he didn't bruise yellow and afterwards black, but merely turned red and then white again. Mathers, besides being captain of the First Footer eleven, had nigger hair, that girls always go dotty about, and black eyes, and pretty nearly as much mustache as eyebrow. As for me, my biceps were the biggest in the lower school, which isn't much, of course; but things like that tell with a girl.

Then it was that conversation turned on Steggles. He was a new boy, due that afternoon. Hardly had the name passed my lips when the door opened, and the Doctor's head appeared. The next moment a chap followed him.

"Ah! there are some of the fellows by the fire," said the Doctor. "Is that you, Tomkins? But I needn't ask."

"Yes, sir," said Nubby, rising.

"You are ill-advised, Tomkins, to spend the greater part of your leisure sitting, as you do, almost upon the hob. A constitu-

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tional weakness is thereby increased. This is Steggles. You will have time for a little conversation before tea."

The Doctor disappeared, and Steggles came slowly down the room with his hands in his pockets. There was nothing to indicate a new boy about him. He had red rims to his eyes and a spot or two on his face, chiefly near his nose and on his forehead; his hair was sandy, and he wore a gold watch-chain.

"You're called Steggles, aren't you?" said Nubby, who was an awfully civil chap in his manners.

"I am."

"Well, I hope you'll like Merivale."

"Do you?"

"All right in summer-time when there's hay. Hate it when I'm ill, which I am now."

"What can you do?" asked Mathers in his abrupt way.

"I can draw," said Steggles.

"What?"

"Devils."

"Do one," said Mathers.

He got a piece of *Cambridge demi* and a

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pen and ink. Then Steggles, evidently anxious to please, sat down, and did as good a devil as ever I saw. Nubby and I were greatly pleased.

“What else can you do?” said Mathers, as if such a power to draw devils wasn’t as much as you could expect from one chap.

“I can smoke.”

“Cigarettes? So can anybody.”

“No; a pipe.”

“Oh! where did you learn that?”

“At Harrow.”

Then Steggles started like a guilty thing and put his hand over his mouth—too late. A rumor we had heard was proved true.

“It would have been sure to get out, and I don’t care who knows it, for that matter,” said Steggles, defiantly. “I had to leave there because I didn’t know enough, and couldn’t get up higher in the school. I’m rather backward through not being properly taught. The teaching at Harrow’s simply cruel. Not but what I’ve taught myself a thing or two, mind you. I’m fifteen.”

He looked at us out of his red-rimmed eyes, and put me in mind of a ferret I’ve

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got at home. He might have been any age up to twenty, I thought.

“Can you play anything?” asked Mathers.

“The piano.”

Mathers shivered and Nubby grew excited.

“So can I. We’ll do duets,” he said.

“If you like,” said Steggles.

Then the tea-bell rang.

## II

Whole books might be written about Steggles at Merivale. I heard Thompson say, after he had been there a week, that it wasn’t what he didn’t know had rendered it necessary for Steggles to leave Harrow, but what he did know. Certainly he had a great deal of general information about rum things. He got newspapers by post concerning sporting matters; he knew an immense deal about dogs and horses; and Nubbs, who was a judge, said his piano-playing surpassed his devil-drawing for sheer brilliance. Yet, with all these accomplishments, he only managed to get into the

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Fourth. As to his smoking, it was certainly wonderful. And he ate things afterwards to hide the smell. He had a genius for wriggling out of rows and for getting them up between other fellows. He loved to look on at fighting and knew all the proper rules. On the whole he was rather a beast, and, if it hadn't been for Nubby, Mathers and I should have barred him. But all I'm going to tell about now is the hideous discovery of Steggles and M., and the thing that happened on the day of the match with Buckland Grammar School.

M. had been very queer for a fortnight—queer, I mean, with all three of us—which was unusual. Then, seeing how the cat had taken to jumping, I tackled her one morning going through the hall to the Doctor's study.

“How d' you like Steggles?” I said.

“Very well. He's clever,” she said.

“He's fifteen,” I said; “he ought to know something if he's ever going to. He's only in the Fourth, anyway.”

“You're jealous and so is Mathers,” she said.



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“Jealous of a chap with ferret-eyes! Not likely,” I said.

“You are, though.”

“Not more than Nubbs and Mathers, anyway,” I said. “It’s off with the old friends and on with the new, I suppose.”

“Steggles knows how to treat a girl. You might learn manners from him, and so might the others,” she said.

“And also the piano, perhaps?”

“He plays beautifully.”

“Have you seen him play football?”

“No.”

“Lucky for you.”

“Football isn’t everything.”

“No, not since he came; I’ve noticed that.”

This bitter speech stung M., and her eyes jolly well flashed sparks.

“Nor singing either,” I went on. “Nubbs nearly burst himself last Sunday in chapel; and all the time you were watching Steggles making a rabbit with his pocket-handkerchief.”

“I’ll thank you not to interest yourself in me any more,” she said, “either in chapel or out of it.”

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“All right. I dare say I shall still live,” I said. “Does that remark apply equally to Mathers and Nubby, or only to me?”

“To Mathers, yes,” she said. “He’s as bad as you are. Not to Nubbs.”

Then she went.

Well, there it stood. When I told them Mathers seemed to think I needn’t have dragged him in, and Nubbs got clean above himself with hope, not seeing that he was really just as much out of it as us. Of course we chucked Steggles for good and all then, and told him what we thought of him. That was when he said something about only the brave deserving the fair, and Mathers made him sit down in a puddle for cheeking him in the playground. Steggles’s eyes looked like one of his own devils while he sat there, but he took it jolly quietly at the time. That got Nubby’s wool off though, because he supported Steggles, and things were, in fact, rather difficult all round till the day of the Buckland Grammar School match. Buckland was two miles from Merivale, and most of the team went by train; but Mathers and I, the day being fine, de-

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cided to walk; and at the last moment Nubbs asked if he might come with Steggles.

Out of consideration for Nubby we agreed, and the four of us started on a fine bright afternoon just after dinner. Mathers and I had our football things on, of course; Nubbs was dressed in his usual style, and Steggles, who used to get himself up tremendously on half-holidays, wore yellow spats over his boots, and a sort of white thing under his waistcoat, and gloves. We had rather more than half an hour's walk before us, and hardly were we out of sight of Merivale when Steggles pulled out his pipe and lighted it.

### III

The artfulness of Steggles properly begins here. He knew several things we didn't. He knew, for instance, that M. was coming to the football match, that she was going to ride her bicycle over on the road by which we walked, that only the day before he had quarrelled with her, and that his position with regard to her was at that hour most

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risky. All these things Steggles well knew, and we didn't. So he lighted his pipe with an air of long practice. The smell was fine, and he smacked his lips now and then.

"Nice pouch?" he said, handing me a velveteen pouch with his initials on it in green silk.

"I'll bet a girl did that," said Mathers.

"It's a secret," said Steggles, smiling to himself.

Then he asked very civilly if we would care to join him, explaining that he generally kept a few spare pipes about him for friends.

"I would if it wasn't for the match," said Mathers.

"So would I," I said.

"Well, my baccy might turn you fellows up. Perhaps you are wise," declared Steggles, puffing away. Then he tried Nubby with a little cherry-wood pipe, and Nubbs thought a whiff or two wouldn't hurt him and began rather nervously, but gathered courage as he went on.

"I heard my father say once that life without tobacco would be hell," said Steggles; "and I agree with him."

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“So do I; it’s very soothing,” said Nubby.

Then Mathers burst out. He had been sulking ever since Steggles hinted that the contents of his velveteen pouch were too strong for us.

“If you think I funk your tobacco you’re wrong,” Mathers said. “I’ve smoked three parts of a cigar before to-day.”

“A chocolate one, perhaps?” said Steggles, but in such a humble, inquiring voice that Mathers couldn’t hit him.

“No, a tobacco one; and if you’ve got another pipe I’ll show you.”

“So will I,” I chimed in. Mathers’s lead was always good enough for me.

Steggles immediately lugged out two more pipes. He seemed to be stuffed with them.

“Get it well alight at the start,” he explained, handing a fusee.

“All right, all right, I know,” said Mathers. Soon we were at it like four chimneys, and Steggles praised us in such a way that we could take no offence.

“You’ve all smoked many a time and oft, I can see that,” he said.

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Mathers spat about a good deal, and fancied tobacco was probably a fine steadier for the nerves before a football match; and Nubbs said he thought so too; and he also thought that after a little smoking one didn't want to talk, but ought just to keep quiet and think of interesting things.

"It widens the mind," said Steggles.

We tramped on rather silently for ten minutes till Nubbs spoke again. To our surprise his hopeful tone had changed, and we found he had turned a sort of putty-color, with blue lips. He said:

"I'll overtake you fellows. I think I've got—I've got a bit of a sunstroke or something. It'll pass off, no doubt."

"Better not smoke any more," said Steggles.

"It isn't that, but I won't, all the same. I'll just dodge through that hole in the hedge and find some wild strawberries or hazel-nuts, or something."

Seeing it was a frosty day in December Nubby's statements looked wild. But he went. There was a hole in the hedge, with tree-roots trailing across it, and Nubbs

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crawled shakily through, like a wounded rabbit, into a place where a board was stuck up saying that people would be prosecuted according to law if they went there. But he didn't seem to care, though it wasn't a thing he would have done in cold blood. I saw Mathers grow uneasy in his mind.

"Wasn't the pipe—eh?"

"No, no. This tobacco—why, a child could smoke it," said Steggles. "You know what Nubbs is. It's only an excuse to turn. He hates football and hates walking."

We kept on again, and I began to feel a slight perspiration on my forehead and a weird sort of feeling everywhere. I had smoked about half the pipe.

"I sha'n't go on with this now because of the match," I said, hastily knocking out the remaining tobacco and handing his loathsome little clay back to Steggles.

"Why!" he said, "blessed if you haven't gone the same color as Nubbs did! Don't say you've got a sunstroke too?"

There was something in the voice of Steggles I didn't much like, but I hardly felt equal to answering him then.

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“You’re all right, anyway, aren’t you, Mathers?” he asked.

“Of course I am. What the dickens d’ you mean?”

“Nothing. Glad you like my baccy. There’s plenty of time for another pipe.”

“No there isn’t,” said Mathers. “I very much wish there was.”

We walked on a few yards farther.

“D’ you drink that rich, brown cod-liver oil, the same as Nubby?” asked Steggles of Mathers, suddenly. Mathers looked at him, and I knew how things were in a moment. For a moment my own sufferings were forgotten before the awful spectacle of the ruin of Mathers. He gave his pipe back quietly, took great gasps of air, mopped his forehead, and rolled his eyes about. Then he said :

“I’m not quite happy about Nubbs. You push on, and I’ll overtake you.”

“Hanged if you’re not queer too!” exclaimed Steggles. “Whoever would have thought that Three Castles—”

“Shut up,” said Mathers, hoarsely. “It was the boi—boiled beef at dinner.”

He spoke the words with an awful effort.



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“So it was,” I said, feebly. “We never could stand it—either of us.”

“A steaming glass of hot grog is what you want,” said Steggles, sympathetically.

“Go!” gasped Mathers, who really looked horrid now; “go! or I’ll kick you, if it kills me to do it.”

“Blessed if you haven’t turned green, Mathers,” said Steggles. “You look as if you’d been buried and dug up again. I don’t say it unkindly, but it’s jolly curious.”

At the same moment ting! ting! went a bicycle bell; and there was Milly, looking fine.

“You’ll all be late,” she said.

We prayed she would hurry on and not observe us too narrowly. Then that beast, Steggles, made her stop.

“Look here,” he said, “it’s frightfully serious because of the match—these poor chaps are ill—just cast your eye at the colors they’ve gone. They worried me to let them try to smoke, and—”

“I’ll break your neck for this!” interrupted Mathers. Then he turned to M.

“If you’re a lady, if you ever cared an

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atom about us, please ride on round that corner. We're ill—can't you see it?"

"Yes, I can—anybody could. I'm sorry. But you won't hurt Steggles if I go?" said M.

"No ; I promise. Say we're on the road and shall be there in ten—ten— Go !"

M. took the hint and rode off, with Steggles frisking beside her, like the dog he was.

"Thank the Lord !" said Mathers. Then horrid things happened both to him and me.

We crawled to the match more dead than alive and found a crowd waiting, and Browne and several of the other masters. We were fully twenty minutes late. "This is very unsportsmanlike, the days being so short too !" Browne squeaked. Then we took off our coats and tottered into the field of play.

Of course Buckland Grammar School won. Our side would have done a long way better without us. I couldn't take a pass or shoot for the life of me—it occupied all my time wrestling with nature, let alone the Bucklanders. And Mathers, who played back, was worse. The roughs "guyed" him, and asked him what he'd been drinking. If

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they'd asked him what he'd been smoking there might have been some sense in it. He told me afterwards that he often saw three footballs at one time when he tried to kick, and sometimes four, and the ball he kicked always turned out to be an apparition. Bradwell kept goal grandly too; but it was no good with Mathers like that, and he utterly ruined Ashby Major, the other back.

Nubbs had gone to bed when we got back, and the matron, knowing Nubbs had a tricky system, sent for Doctor Barnes. Nubbs, therefore, gave himself away.

M. never looked at any of us again, and she and Steggles undoubtedly became frightful pals; but the next term, just before Easter, I had the pleasure of writing a fine letter to Mathers, who had left Merivale, and was reading for six months with a private tutor before going to Cambridge. This is part of the letter :

“Dear Mathers,” I wrote, “you will be interested to know that Browne has come down on Steggles at last. I fancy Browne knew the Doctor was fairly sick of Steggles and wanted to be rid of him. In fact, I heard

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the Doctor call Steggles a canker-worm myself. Anyway, Browne blew up on the smoking, and Steggles will soon probably vanish, like the dew upon the fleece. M. cried a bit, I fancy, when she heard it, but Nubbs says she smiled at him two mornings afterwards coming out of chapel. Nubbs expects to crack (his voice) any day, but he hopes to get a definite understanding with M. before it happens. It'll be too late after. Of course she never looks at me. She told Steggles, and he told me, that she could not possibly care for a person she had once seen the hue of a Liberty Art Fabric—meaning me. I scragged Steggles after he told me. But it is all over now. I believe he is to go into his father's business—Steggles & Stote, Wine Merchants. M. is more beautiful than ever, though I'm afraid she's got a bad disposition. To reflect on a fellow's color at such a time as that was a bit rough."

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## The Protest of the Wing Dormitory

### I

**T**HIS is the story of the most tremendous thing that ever happened at Dunston's, or any other school, I should think. Though in it luckily, I didn't do any of the big part, being merely one of those chaps who were flogged and not expelled afterwards. Trelawny and Bradwell carried the thing through, and all the other fellows in the Wing Dormitory followed their lead. And, mind you, everybody had the welfare of the school at heart. It seemed a jolly brave sort of thing to do, and jolly interesting. Trelawny arranged the military side of the business, and Bradwell, whose father is known as the "Whiteley" of some place in Yorkshire, looked to the commissariat, which means feeding. As to Trelawny, who really

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captained the dormitory, he was Cornish, and a relation of that very chap fifty thousand Cornish men wanted to know the reason why about long ago. He was going to be a soldier, read history books for choice, and already knew many military words.

I was Bradwell's fag at the time, because Watson minor had failed in some secret enterprise, and I remember the first conversation which led to everything. Happening to take some tuck in to Bradwell in the Fifth class-room, I found Trelawny there and heard him say :

"The only way. A protest, and a jolly dignified one, must be made. It's for the credit of the school, and if the Doctor will not see it we must show him. I've thought about it a lot, and I think if a section of chaps could put themselves in a strong, fortified position they might demand to be heard, and even be able to offer an—an ultimatum. Of course, doing the thing for the good of the school and not for ourselves makes us morally right."

"Of course," said Bradwell.

"But we must be physically strong. In

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warfare the relative positions of the sides are always taken into account when the treaties of peace are arranged."

"What are you staring at?" said Bradwell to me. "You hook it."

So I hooked. But I knew perfectly well what they were talking about. Everybody in the Wing Dormitory did, because they often discussed the same question after they thought the rest of the chaps were asleep. It was the new mathematical master, Thompson, who troubled not only Trelawny and Bradwell but a lot of the other fellows. Trelawny had called him an "unholy bounder" the third day he was there, and that seemed to be a general opinion. Yet, with all his bounderishness, he was awfully clever, and meant well. But he didn't know anything about chaps in a general way, and he left out his h's and stuck them in with awfully rum effects. Thompson tried hard to be friendly to everybody, but only the kids liked him. He couldn't understand somehow, and insulted chaps in the most frightful way, not seeing any difference between fellows at the top of the school and mere

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kids at the bottom. Captains of elevens were as nothing to him. He seemed to have read up boys like he read mathematics and stuff—from rotten books. He would say sometimes, “Now, you fellows, let’s ’ave a jolly game of leap-frog before the bell rings,” and things like that. Boys never do play leap-frog except in books really. Once he offered to show Trelawny how to make a kite, and he asked Chambers—*Chambers*, mind you, the Captain of the First Eleven at Cricket—whether he knew a shop where there were capital iron hoops for sale at a shilling each. I heard him say it, and he put it like this: “I say, Chambers, do you know those splendid ’oops they sell at Burford’s in ’Igh Street? It’s out of bounds, but if you like I’ll get you one this evening. They’ve got iron crooks and everything. I make this offer because you understood a little of what I said about Conic Sections this afternoon.” Thompson meant so jolly well that nobody could get in a wax with him personally ; and, as I say, the kids, who didn’t see the “unholy bounder” side of him, and only knew he stood gallons of ginger-beer on half-holi-



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days in the playing-fields, liked him better than anybody. But Trelawny took big views, and so did Bradwell, and they decided to make a definite protest.

Nothing happened till one day Thompson said something about Trelawney's "Celtic thickness of skull." That stung Trelawny like nettles, and he set to work and arranged the great plot of the Wing Dormitory. He decided that the fifteen chaps who slept in the isolated Wing Dormitory of Dunston's were to fortify the place, and hold it before the world and the Doctor as a protest against Thompson. Every chap in the dormitory, from Trelawny and Bradwell to Watson minor, signed their names in their own blood on a paper Trelawny drew out; and Watson minor fainted while he was doing it, not being able to see his own gore on a pen without going off. We swore by a tremendous swear to obey Trelawny, to fortify the Wing Dormitory against siege, to devote every penny of our week's pocket-money to provisions, and to hold out till we starved, having first signed another paper for Doctor Dunston

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explaining our united protest against Thompson, and hoping for the good of the school that he would be removed. I didn't understand much about it really. In fact, I don't believe anybody did but Trelawny and Bradwell. Only they said we were acting for the good of the school, and they also said that if we held the Wing Dormitory properly nothing short of cannon or starvation could dislodge us. It was a tremendously tall building, complete in itself, with iron fire-proof doors constructed to cut it off from the rest of the school, and with a bath-room and a lavatory adjoining, all at a great height above the ground. The windows were barred to keep chaps getting out. The bars would also keep chaps getting in, as Trelawny pointed out. He found also that it was possible when the iron doors were closed to pull down some wood-work, and stick things behind the doors so as they could not be opened again. The only entrance to the Wing Dormitory was through these iron doors, so once shut we were safe against anything but gunpowder; and Trelawny said Doctor Dunston was not the man to

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resort to physical means, especially if it meant knocking the place about. Bradwell came out wonderfully about the food, and knowing jolly well that they would turn the water out of the bath - room when the siege started, he made every chap fill his basin and jug the night before ; because fresh water is vital to a siege.

There were fifteen chaps, and the time came at last, and one night we laid the manifesto on the mat outside the iron door, made everything fast, and waited to see what would happen. Some fellows thought that Thompson would be sent away at once, to avoid the affair becoming serious ; others fancied we should be starved out or expelled to a man. Trelawny never hazarded any guess at what would be the end of it. "We are doing our duty in the interests of the school," he said, "and whatever happens we mean well ; and if it gets into print the sympathy of all chaps in public schools will be on our side."

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## II

When the gas was turned out at the meter on the night preceding the siege, Trelawny made a short speech. First he lighted two candles and made us sign the protest; then he explained his military system of night and day watches and guards. Each of the four windows had a guard at all hours, and two chaps were to be stationed at the iron door. This was made doubly strong by beds piled against it, after the manifesto had been finally signed and left outside. The document ran thus:

“ We, the undersigned, thinking that the fame of Dunston’s is tarnished by Mr. Thompson, M.A., Fellow of Trinity College, Camb., hereby protest, and formally assert themselves to call attention to Mr. Thompson. We, the undersigned, have no personal grudge to Mr. Thompson, but think him unsuited to carry on the great reputation of Dunston’s. We, the undersigned, take this important step fully alive to the gravity of it, for we are prepared to suffer if necessary

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to call attention to the subject. We do not doubt Mr. Thompson's goodness, and wish it to be understood that the action is abstract and not personal. A string will be lowered from the third window of the Wing Dormitory to-morrow at 8.30 A.M. Any answer to the protest will receive instant attention from us the undersigned."

Then followed the names.

Of course, it was all Greek to the kids, but they put their trust in Trelawny and signed to a kid.

Inside the dormitory we were jolly busy, too, because after Trelawny, as commander, had made his rules and regulations clear, Bradwell, as the head of the commissariat, drew up a list of the total supplies, and showed what each fellow had contributed to the store. This list I copied for Bradwell at the time, with notes about the different supplies. It comes in here, and I must give it, just to show what different ideas different chaps have about the things you ought to eat in a siege.

TRELAWNY.—Two hams, eight loaves of bread.

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BRADWELL.—Three tins potted salmon, two seed-cakes (big), box of biscuits.

ASHBY MAJOR.—Ten tins sardines. (Ashby has five shillings a week pocket-money, his father being rather rich. Bradwell said it was rather a pity he spent it all in sardines.)

ASHBY MINOR.—Three pats of butter, three tins Swiss milk, one tin Guava jelly. (Bradwell was awfully pleased about the milk, because he said it was at once nourishing and pleasant to the taste.)

WILSON.—Six dried herrings, two pots veal and ham paste, one pot marmalade. (Herrings useless, unless eaten raw.)

WEST.—Four bottles raspberry vinegar. (I am West, and I thought raspberry vinegar would be a jolly good thing to break the monotony of a siege. But Bradwell said it was simply a luxury.)

MORRANT.—One hamper containing twenty-four apples, twenty-seven pears, two pots blackberry jam. (Morrant has no pocket-money, but Bradwell said the fruit was good for a change.)

GIDEON.—Nothing. (Gideon is a Jew by birth, and gets ten shillings a week pocket-

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money. He pretended he had forgotten. Trelawny says he will suffer for it in the course of the siege.)

MATHERS.—Eight pieces of shortbread, five slabs of toffee, seven sausage-rolls. (The rolls were cut in half to be eaten first thing before they went bad. But Bradwell said Mathers had made the selection of a fool, and so Mathers was rather vexed with Bradwell.)

NEWNES.—Ten loaves (five brown), one packet of beef tabloids. (Trelawny congratulated Newnes.)

McINNES.—A lot of spring onions and lettuces, costing one-and-sixpence. (McInnes had been reading a book about chaps getting scurvy on a raft, and he thought a siege would be just the place for scurvy, so he bought all green stuff; and Bradwell said it was good.)

CORKEY MINIMUS.—Three pounds of mixed sweets. (Bradwell smacked his head when he heard what Corkey minimus had got; but Trelawny pointed out that a few sweets served out from time to time might distract the mind.)

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DERBYSHIRE.—A pigeon-pie and thirteen currant buns with saffron in them.

FORREST. — Four pots Bovril, one bottle cider. (Bovril can be taken on bread like treacle, and once saved the lives of several shipwrecked sailors.)

WATSON MINOR.—Two pounds dog-biscuits, one pound dried figs, one box of dates. (Asked why he took dog-biscuits, he explained it was because he had seen an advertisement about the goodness of them. It said they had dried buffalo meat in them, which was a thing you could live for an immense duration of time on. Trelawny said that was pretty fair sense for a kid.)

All this splendid food was brought out of boxes where it had been hidden and placed in the hands of Bradwell; and that night he sat up with a candle and drew out bills of fare and made calculations. We were rather surprised in the morning to hear the rations would not last more than a fortnight, but Trelawny said the siege must be over long before that. Nobody slept much, and many had dressed before the first bell rang.



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When the second bell rang Trelawny and Bradwell went to the door to listen.

Presently Thompson, of all people, came up and tried to get in and couldn't. He shook the door, then saw the envelope addressed to the Doctor, and said :

“ What's the meaning of this, you fellows ? Let me in at once ! ”

But nobody answered. Then he cleared off. At 8.30 the string was lowered from the window, and Trelawny went and stood by it to pull up any letter that might be fastened to it. But none was. Some of the chaps were prowling about outside looking at the Wing Dormitory, but Trelawny wouldn't let anybody go to the windows except himself.

Then, as nothing happened, we had breakfast. McInnes and Forrest were told off to help Bradwell, and each chap's rations were put on his bed after he had made it. We all got the same except Gideon—a slice of bread, two sardines, half one of Mathers's sausage-rolls, and half a tumbler of water. So we began at once to see what a jolly serious thing a siege is. And Gideon saw

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it more than we did, because he had no sardines and no sausage-roll. He offered Trelawny money for a little more food, but Trelawny said he shouldn't have as much as one mixed sweet, though he might pay gold for it. He said, "You will have barely enough to keep you alive." And Gideon turned awfully white when he heard it.

Breakfast didn't take more than about five minutes, then there was a tremendous knocking at the iron door, and Bradwell said the trouble had begun, but Trelawny said it was the summons to a parley. Anyway, we heard the Doctor's voice, and it wasn't much of a parley, strictly speaking, because he spoke first, and merely gave us two minutes to be in our places down-stairs.

"If you don't obey, one and all of you," said the Doctor, "you must take the consequences. As it is, they will be sufficiently grave. Any further offence I shall know how to treat."

"If you please, sir," said Trelawny, "the string is out of the window. We are doing this for the good of the school, and—"

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Then he stopped, because he had heard the Doctor go away.

“He’ll try a blacksmith first,” said Forrest; “then, when they find they can’t do anything with this iron door, he’ll send for policemen.”

But nothing was done, strangely enough, and Trelawny made the chaps lie down and sleep if they could in the afternoon, because he expected a night attack with ladders. To get in it would be necessary to remove the bars from the windows, and anybody attempting to do so would, of course, be at our mercy with the windows open.

For dinner that day we had one of Trelawny’s hams cut into fifteen pieces, with two rather thin slices of bread, one spring onion, and three mixed sweets each, and as much raspberry vinegar as would go into a bullet-mold that Wilson had. Gideon ate the ham like anybody else, which shows Jews don’t refuse pork in any shape at times of siege, whatever they say. Trelawny wouldn’t give him any raspberry vinegar, but Ashby minor let him have one of his mixed sweets, which was green and had arsenic in it, Ashby minor thought.

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It seemed a frightfully long day, and nothing being done against us made it longer. Bradwell tried to cook Wilson's herrings with stuff out of a pillow-case, but unfortunately failed. Trelawny explained that Dunston was working out tactics, and would do something when the moon rose. He said our motto was to be "Defence, not Defiance"; but Derbyshire said they were going to starve us out like rats, so as to reduce the glory as much as possible. One or two chaps had private rows that day, and Trelawny was pretty short and sharp. He said we were to regard ourselves as under martial law, and he stopped Forrest having any tea at all because he looked out of the window and waved his hand to Steggles in the playground. What made it worse for Forrest was that we opened one of his pots of Bovril at that very tea, and of course he didn't have any. But Trelawny said it was good discipline, and wouldn't let Mathers divide his share with young Forrest, though he wanted to.

The day dragged out. Nothing was done, and no letter was put on the string. Then

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night came and moonlight, and Trelawny set watches at each window and door with directions to wake him instantly if anything happened or anybody assembled outside below. But he didn't sleep really. In fact, only a few of the kids did. Bradwell got a bit down in the mouth after dark, and I heard him say to Trelawny it wasn't turning out like he thought, and Trelawny said :

“It's always the same when a position is impregnable. I could show you a dozen similar sieges in history. Of course, it's the most uninteresting sort of siege when chaps simply sit and see the enemy get to the end of their food supplies, but they won't do that with us. The day boys will talk, and old Dunston will raise heaven and earth to keep it out of the printed papers. I bet he'll tie something to the string to-morrow.”

Some of us tried to take a bright view like Trelawny, but when we heard him tell Bradwell to run no risks and serve out as little bread as possible, we felt that he did not really feel as hopeful of a short siege as he seemed. Just before dusk Corkey minimus was caught in the act of flinging

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a letter out of the window addressed to his mother. It was torn up, and he was cautioned. That ended the day, and nothing else happened until a quarter to one o'clock. Then Bradwell, whose watch it was, called "Cave!" and came to Trelawny with frightful excitement to say that there was the head of a ladder at his window, and a man climbing up. Trelawny was there in a second, and asked in a loud voice what the man wanted, and said he'd throw the ladder down if the man came up another rung. But the man said :

"Hush! you silly fellow; I'm a friend with news from the enemy. The least you can do is to 'ear what I've got to say."

"Good Lord!" said Trelawny, "it's Thompson!"

And so it was, and his huge head soon got level with the window, and looked like a bull's against the moonlight. Trelawny made everybody get out of earshot except Bradwell; but he didn't happen to see me, being rolled up in bed near the window, so I heard.

First Thompson said :

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“Look ’ere, you Cornish boy, I’m sorry to find we ’aven’t ’it it off by any means, and you want me to go, and you’ve locked yourself and friends up ’ere as a protest. Now, ’ow ’ave I ’urt your feelings, and what have I done?”

Which was a bit difficult for Trelawny; but he fell back on the manifesto to the Doctor.

“It’s no personal matter, sir. We wish it to be understood that the action is abstract.”

“Oh. Well, I can’t say I know what the devil you mean by that; but I like you all better than ever, and I understand this much, that you don’t like me. I’m not proud. I’m quite as ready to learn as to teach. Tell me what makes you do this, you queer things.”

“We don’t think you are the right man for Dunston’s, sir,” said Trelawny, firmly.

“Well, but isn’t Doctor Dunston the best judge? His experience reaches back rather farther than yours. Anyway, I’m not going. You’ll ’ave to tolerate me. You’ll ’ave to like me too. I’ve disobeyed all orders by climbing up ’ere now to advise you to give in

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to-morrow. Take my advice, and come out at the first bell, and with ropes round your necks. Measures are in 'and ; and as your protest has utterly failed, the sooner you give in and take your punishment the better. I've done my best to make it as light as I can ; but boys mustn't do this sort of thing in big schools, you know. It's very naughty indeed."

" We shall keep up the protest for another day at least, sir," said Trelawny, with a lot of side in his voice.

" No, my lad, you won't," answered Thompson. " The Doctor has taken my advice, and by very simple means, with the least possible waste of time, trouble, and money, we shall enter your stronghold to-morrow. I am quite good-tempered to-day. To-morrow I shall probably be quite cross and 'ot. The matter is in my 'ands. Do be good boys and yield while there is time. The sooner the better."

" I regret we cannot comply with your terms, sir," said Trelawny.

" I'm not offering any," answered Mr. Thompson. " I only want to make your



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foolishness fall as light as possible. Your mothers' and fathers' hearts will ache over this headstrong business."

"The parley is ended," said Trelawney.

"All right," said Mr. Thompson, "I'm afraid you're a hawful little prig, Trelawny." Then he went down the ladder, and looking out, Bradwell reported that he saw him taking it back to the gardener's shed in the shrubbery.

### III

There is not much more to be said about the protest of the Wing Dormitory. I suppose Thompson was better up in tactics really than Trelawny. Anyway, he found a weak spot that Trelawny never thought of, and he ended the siege by half-past seven the following morning.

About six Ashby major, whose watch it was, reported that the school fire-escape was coming round the corner. With it appeared Mr. Thompson, Mr. Mannering, who is an Oxford "Blue" and not much smaller than Mr. Thompson, the Doctor, the gar-

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dener, and the military agent who drills our volunteer corps and teaches gymnastics. They put the escape against the wall of the Wing Dormitory, between two windows, where it couldn't be reached by us. Then Thompson and Mannering went up, and the sergeant and gardener followed. The Doctor waited at the foot of the ladder.

"They'll get through the roof!" said Trelawny; "I never thought of that!"

Trelawny turned awfully rum in the face, and tried to think out a way of repelling a roof attack; but there wasn't time. In about ten minutes or so the end of an iron bar came through the ceiling; then followed a regular avalanche of plaster and dust, that fell on Watson minor and jolly nearly smothered him. Then came Thompson, Mannering followed, and the gardener and the sergeant dropped after them as quick as lightning. Of course, we were done, because only half of us were fighters, the rest being kids; and Trelawny himself being just fifteen and Bradwell fourteen and Ashby major twelve and a half, and I only eleven and a half, it was no good.

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“We surrender,” said Trelawny.

“Surrender, you little brute, I should think you did yield!” said Mannering, who had cut his hand getting the slates off the roof, and was in a rare bate.

“You needn’t insult a defeated force, sir,” said Trelawny, keeping his nerve jolly well. “We are prepared to pay the penalty of failure, and having meant well we—we don’t care.”

But whether we meant well or not, I know Trelawney and Bradwell both got expelled, though Thompson was said to have tried very hard for them. Dunston didn’t seem to realize what frightfully good motives prompted them to protest against Thompson in an abstract way. Nothing was done to anybody else except Ashby major and me and Wilson. We were flogged by Mr. Mannering for the Doctor; and he did it as you might expect from a “Blue.”

As for Thompson, he stayed on, and the protest never got into print; and there wasn’t much disgrace for Trelawny or Bradwell after all, because the first afterwards got into Woolwich ten from the top, through an

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army crammer's, and the second joined his father, who was the Whiteley of the North I spoke of. He wrote to me only a week ago to say that he was getting a hundred pounds a year from his governor for doing much less than he had to do at Dunston's. Mind you, Thompson is a jolly good sort, really, and we know it now ; and, as I heard my uncle say of somebody else, I don't suppose it's a matter of life and death whether or no a chap puts his h's in the wrong places if his heart's in the right one.

## “Freckles” and “Frenchy”

**H**E was the most peculiar chap that ever came to Merivale, not excepting even Mason, who shot the Doctor's wife's parrot with a catapult, and, after he had been flogged, offered to stuff it in the face of the whole school, and nearly got expelled. Freckles was so called owing to his skin, which was simply a complicated pattern much like what you can see in any map of the Grecian Archipelago. This arose, he thought, from his having been born in Australia. Anyway, it was rum to see; and so were his hands, which had reddish down on the backs. His eyes were also reddish—a sort of mixture of red and gray specks, and they glimmered like a cat's when he was angry, which was often. His real name was Maine, and he had no side. His father had made a big fortune selling wool at

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Sydney, and his grandfather was one of the last people to be transported to Botany Bay through no fault of his own. After he had been on a convict ship five years a chap at home confessed on his death-bed that he had done the thing Maine's grandfather was transported for. So they naturally let Maine's grandfather go free; and he was so much annoyed about it that he never came back home again, but married a farmer's daughter near Sydney and settled out there for good.

Maine didn't think great things of England, and was always talking about the Australian forests of blue gum-trees and bush, and sneering rather at the size of our forests round Merivale, though they were good ones. He never joined in games, but roamed away alone for miles and miles into the country on half-holidays, and trespassed with a cheek I never saw equalled. He could run like a hare—especially about half a mile or so, which, as he explained to me, is just about a distance to blow a keeper. Certainly, though often chased, he was never caught and never recognized, owing to things he did

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which he had learned in Australia and copied from famous bushrangers. His great hope some day was to be a bushranger himself, and he practised in a quiet way every Saturday afternoon, making it a rule to go out of bounds always. His get-up was fine. My name is Tomkins, called “Nubby” because I happen to have a rather large sort of nose, and, being fond of the country and not keen on games, Maine rather took to me, and after I had sworn on crossed knives not to say a word to a soul (which I never did till Freckles left) he told me his secrets and showed me his things. If you’d seen Freckles starting for an excursion you wouldn’t have said there was anything remarkable about him; but really he was armed to the teeth, and had everything a bushranger would be likely to want in a quiet place like Merivale. Down his leg was the barrel of an air-gun, strong enough to kill any small thing like a cat at twenty-five yards; the rest of the gun was arranged inside the lining of his coat, and the slugs it fired he carried loose in his trousers-pockets. Round his waist he had a leather belt he got from a sailor for a pound.

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Inside the leather was human skin, said to be flayed off a chap by cannibals somewhere, which was a splendid thing to have for your own, if it was true ; and in the belt a place had been specially made for a knife. Freckles, of course, had a knife in it—a “bowie” knife that made you cold to see. He never used it, but kept it ready, and said if a keeper ever caught him he possibly might have to. In addition to these things he carried in his coat-pockets a little spirit-lamp and a collapsible tin pot and a bag of tea.

He said tea was the very life of men in the bush, and that often after a hard escape, when he was out of danger, he would get away behind a woodstack or under banks of a stream, or some such secret place, and brew a cup and drink it, and feel the better for it.

Lastly, Freckles had a flat lead mask with holes for the eyes and mouth, which he always fitted on when trespassing. He said it was copied from the helmet Ned Kelly, the King of the Bushrangers, used to wear, but it was not bullet-proof, but only used



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for a disguise. We were in the same dormitory, and one night, when all the chaps had gone to sleep, he dressed up in these things and stood where some moonlight came in, and certainly looked jolly.

Once, as an awful favor—me being smaller than him, and not fast enough to run away from a man—he let me come and see what he did when bushranging on a half-holiday in winter. “I sha’n’t run my usual frightful risks with you,” he said, “because I might have to open fire to save you, and that would be very disagreeable to me; but we’ll trespass a bit, and I’ll shoot a few things, if I can. I don’t shoot much, only for food.”

He made me a mask with tinfoil off chocolate smoothed out and gummed on cardboard; but I had no weapons, and he said I had better not try and get any.

We started for the usual walk. Chaps were allowed to go through a public pine-wood to Merivale; but half through, by a place where was a board which warned us to keep the path, Freckles branched off into some dead bracken, and squatted down and

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put on his mask. I also put on mine. Then he fastened his air-gun together and loaded it, and told me to walk six paces behind him and do as he did. His eyes were awfully keen, and now and then he pointed to a feather on the ground, or an old nest or a patch of rum fungus or a crab-apple still hanging on the tree, though all the leaves were off.

Once he fired at a jay and missed it, then fell down in the fern as if he was shot himself, and remained quite motionless for some time. He told me that he always did so after firing, that he might hear if anybody had been attracted by the sound. It was a well-known bushman's dodge. Once we saw a keeper through a clearing, and Freckles lay flat on his stomach, and so did I. He knew the keeper well, and told me that he had many times escaped from him. We waited half an hour, and turned to go back a different way from that of the keeper.

Then, where a glade sloped down to some water and the grass was all dewy and covered with mole-hills, Freckles went to inspect a trap he had set a week before. He

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was collecting skins for a mole-skin waistcoat, but he said skinning moles was one of the beastliest tasks a hunter ever had. However, there was a mole caught, and he skinned it and wrapped up the skin in leaves and put it in his hat.

Then we had some real sport, for on the other side of the glade we saw rabbits lopping about, and Freckles stalked them through the fern while I waited motionless, and finally he shot a young one. I wanted to take it back and get cook to do it for us, but he said I was a fool.

“If you want any you must have it now. It’s about the time I take a meal,” he said, “and that’s a part of my ranging and hunting you haven’t seen yet.”

He knew the country well, and said we were in one of the most carefully preserved places anywhere about, which must have been true, for there were an awful lot of pheasants calling in the glades. But Freckles got down into a drain and showed me a hollow he had scooped out under a lot of ivy where it fell over a bank.

“This is one of my caves,” he said, “and

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here we can feed and drink in safety ; but you mustn't talk or I sha'n't be able to hear if anything is stirring in the woods."

He took off his mask, set down his gun, and lighted his spirit-stove.

"Skin the rabbit and cut off his hind-legs while I make tea," he said.

So I did, and he held them over the lamp till they were slightly cooked outside, but not right through. He ate and drank with his ears straining for every sound. Then he took the rest of the rabbit and removed all traces of eating, and buried everything we had left.

"If I didn't," he explained, "some keeper's dog would find my lair, and make a row and give it away, and the keepers would doubtless lie in wait for me and catch me red-handed. You can't be too careful, because every man's hand's against you ; which, of course, is the beauty of it."

We got back without anything happening, and I've hated the sight of rabbit pretty well ever since, but Freckles said the juices of animals are better for the human frame underdone.

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Well, that gives you an idea of Freckles, and the affair with Frenchy, which I am going to tell you about, showed that he really was cut out for bushranging. Frenchy, as we called him, was Monsieur Michel. He didn't belong entirely to Dunston's, but lived in Merivale and came to us three days a week, and went to a girl's school the other three. He was a rum, oldish chap, whose great peculiarities were to make puns in English and to appeal to our honor about everything.

He would slang a fellow horribly one day, and wave his arms and pretty nearly jump out of his skin; and the next day he would bring up a whacking pear for the fellow he'd slanged, or a new knife or something. He pretty nearly cried sometimes, and he told us his nerves were frightfully tricky, and often led him to be harsh when he didn't mean it. He couldn't keep order or make chaps work if they didn't choose; and Steggles, who had an awfully cunning dodge of always rubbing him up the wrong way, and then looking crushed and broken-hearted so as to get things, which he did,

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said that Frenchy was like damp fireworks, because you never knew exactly when he'd go off or how.

One day, dashing out of class with a frightful yell, Freckles got sent for, and went back and found Monsieur raving mad. It seemed that Freckles had yelled too soon—before he was out of the class-room, in fact, and Frenchy had got palpitation of the heart from it. He let into Freckles properly then. He said he was his “*bête noire*” and “*un sot à vingt-quatre carats*”—which means an eighteen-carat ass in English, but twenty-four carats in French—and “one of the aborigines who ought to be kept on a chain,” and many other such-like things. Freckles turned all colors, and then white, with a sort of bluish tint to his lips. He didn't say a word, but looked at Frenchy with such a frightful expression that I felt something would happen later. All that happened at the time was that Freckles got the eighth book of Telemachus to write out into French from English, and then correct by Fénelon, which was a pretty big job if a chap had been fool enough to try and do it; and Mon-

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sieur Michel went off to Merivale with a big card on his coat-tail with “*Ici on parle Français*” written upon it in red pencil. This I had managed to do myself while Frenchy was jawing Freckles. I told Freckles, but it didn’t comfort him much. He said there were some things no mortal chap could stand ; and to be called “an aborigine” because a man was born in Australia seemed to him about the bitterest insult even an old frog-eating Frenchman could have invented. Happening to *him*, of all chaps, it was especially a thing which would have to be revenged, seeing what his views were. He said :

“I couldn’t bushrange or anything with a clear conscience in the future if I had a thing like this hanging over me unrevengeed. It’s the frightfulest slur on my character, and I won’t sit down under it for fifty Frenchmen.”

Then he said he should take a week to settle what to do, and went into the playground alone.

Next time Frenchy came up he was just the same as ever — awfully easy-going and

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jolly, and let Freckles off the Telemachus, and offered him as classy a knife, with a corkscrew and other things, including tweezers, as ever you saw—just the knife for Freckles, considering his ways. But it didn't come off. Freckles got white again when he saw the knife, and said :

“Thank you, Monsieur, I don't want your knife ; and the imposition is half done, and will be finished next time you come.”

Then Frenchy called him a silly boy, and tried to make a joke and pinch Freckles by the ear. But nobody saw the joke, and Freckles dodged away. Then Frenchy sighed, and looked round to see who should have the knife, and didn't seem to see anybody in particular, and left it on his desk. He often sighed in class, and sometimes told us he was without friends, unless he might call us friends ; and we said he might.

When he went, Freckles told me he considered the knife was another insult. Then he explained what he was going to do. He said :

“I shall finish the impot first, so as not to



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be obliged to him for anything, and then I shall stick him up.”

“Stick him up—how?” I said.

“It’s a bushranging expression,” he explained. “To ‘stick up’ a man is to make him stand and deliver what he’s got. I see my way to do this with Frenchy. He always goes and comes from Merivale through the woods, as you know, and now he’s up here on Friday nights coaching Slade and Betterton for their army exam. Afterwards he has supper with Mr. Thompson or the Doctor. There you are. I wait my time in the wood, which is jolly lonely by night, though it is such a potty little place hardly worth calling a wood; then he comes along, and I stick him up.”

“It’s highway robbery,” I said. “You might get years and years of imprisonment.”

“I might,” he said, “but I sha’n’t. You must begin your career some time, and I’m going to next Friday night. I’ve often got out of the dormitory and been in that wood by night, and only the chaps in the dormitory have known it.”

Well, the night came, and all that we heard about it till afterwards was that about

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eleven o'clock, or possibly even later than that, there was a fearful pealing at the front door of Dunston's, and looking out we could see a stretcher and something on it. That something was actually Freckles, though the few chaps who knew what was going to be done felt sure it must be Frenchy; because Freckles is five feet ten and growing, and Frenchy isn't more than five feet six at the outside, and a poor thing at that.

But it *was* Freckles all right, and two laboring men had brought him back, and Frenchy had come with them.

Not until five weeks afterwards, when Freckles could get up and limp about, did I hear the truth; and I'll tell it in his own words, because they must be better than a chap's who wasn't there. He seemed frightfully down in the mouth, and said that he could never look fellows in the eyes again; but it cheered him telling me, and when I told him he was thundering well out of it he admitted he was. He said:

"I got off all right, and the moon was as clear as day, and everything just ripe for sticking a chap up. Then, like a fool, hav-

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ing a longish time to wait, I didn't simply stop in shadow behind a tree-trunk or something in the usual way, but thought I'd do a thing I'd never heard of bushrangers doing, though Indian thugs are pretty good at it. I went and got up a tree which has a branch over the road, and I thought I'd drop down almost on top of Frenchy to start with. And that's just what I did do, only I dropped wrong, and came down pretty nearly on my head owing to slipping somehow at the start. What did exactly happen to me as I left the tree I never shall know. Anyway, Frenchy came along sure enough, and I dropped, and he jumped I should think fully a yard in the air ; but that was all, because in falling I hit a big root (it was a beech-tree), and went and broke something in my ankle and something in my chest and couldn't stand. Consequently, of course, I couldn't stick him up. The pain was pretty fair, but feeling what a fool I was seemed to make me forget it. Anyway, finding it was useless to think of sticking him up, I tried to hobble into the fern and get out of sight ; and finding I couldn't crawl, I rolled. But of course you can't roll

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away from a chap, and he came after me, and my mask fell off while I rolled, and he recognized me.

“‘*Mon Dieu!* it is the boy Maine!’ he said. ‘Speak, child, what in the wide world was this?’

“I disguised my voice and said I wasn’t Maine, and that he’d better leave me alone or it might be the worse for him yet. But he wouldn’t go, and, chancing to get queer about the head somehow I went off, I suppose, though it wasn’t for long. When I came to he was gone, but he rushed back in a minute with that rotten old top-hat he wears full of water he’d got from the puddle in the stone-pit. He doused my head and made me sit up with my back against a tree. Then, feeling the frightfulness of it, I begged him to clear out and let me alone. I said:

“‘You don’t know what you’re doing. I’m no friend to you, but the deadliest enemy you’ve got in the world, and if I hadn’t fallen down at a critical moment and broken myself I should have stuck you up, Monsieur Michel. So, now, you know.’

“He said to himself, ‘The poor mad boy

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—the poor mad boy—I will run *à toutes jambes* for succor’; but I told him not to. I began to get a rum hot pain in my side then, but I felt I would gladly have died there rather than be obliged to him. I said :

“ ‘You called me an “aborigine,” which is the most terrible thing you can call an Australian-born chap, and you wanted to pass it off with a knife with a corkscrew and tweezers in it. But you couldn’t expect me to take it, feeling as I did. Now the fortunes of war have given you the victory, and, if you please, I wish you’d go.’

“But he refused. He said he wouldn’t have hurt my feelings for anything. He seemed to overlook altogether what I was going to do to him, and asked me where it hurt me. I told him, and he said it was his fault—fancy that! and wished he was big enough to carry me back. I kept on asking him to go, and at last, after begging my pardon like anything, for about a week it seemed, he went. But I heard him shouting and yelling French yells in the woods, and after a bit he came back with two men and a hurdle. They presently took me back,

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and what Frenchy's said since to the Doctor I don't know. In fact, I didn't know anything for days. Anyway, I've had nothing but a mild rowing and very good grub, and I'm not to be even flogged, though that's probably because I broke a rib or two, not including the bone in my leg. But I'm all right now, and I think it was about the most sporting thing a chap ever did for Frenchy to treat me like that—eh? I shouldn't have thought it was in a Frenchman to do it, especially after I told him what I was going to do."

"Yes," I said, "that's all right, but what about bushranging?"

"It's pretty sickening," he said, "but I feel as if all the keenness was knocked out of me. If a chap can't so much as fall out of a tree on a wanderer's path at the nick of time without smashing himself, what's the good of him?"

"Besides," I said, "if it hadn't been Frenchy, but somebody else of a different turn of mind, he might have taken you at a disadvantage and jolly well killed you."

"In real bushranging that is what would

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have happened,” admitted Freckles. “As it is, I expect months, perhaps years, will have to go by before I feel to hanker after it again. And meantime I sha’n’t rest in peace till I’ve paid Frenchy.”

“How?” I asked.

“Well, I believe it’s to be done. He’s often come to see me while I was on my back in bed, and he’s told me a lot about himself. He’s frightfully hard up, and a Roman Catholic, and hopes to lay his bones in *la belle* France with luck, but he doesn’t think he’ll ever be able to manage it. He told me all this, little knowing my father was extremely rich. Well, you see, the mater wants somebody French for the kids at home, which are girls, and, knowing Frenchy bars this climate, I think Australia might do him good. He’s fifty-three years old, and it seems to me if the gov’nor wrote and offered him his passage and a good screw he’d go. I have made it a personal thing to myself, and told the gov’nor what a good little chap he is, and what a beautiful accent he’s got, and the thing that happened in the wood.”

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The affair dropped then, and about six weeks after, when Freckles was getting fit again, he walked with me one half-holiday to see the place where he was smashed up. The bough was a frightful high one to drop from even in daylight, also it was broken. Freckles got awfully excited when he spotted it.

“There! there!” he said, “that’s the best thing I’ve seen for twelve weeks!”

“I don’t see much to squeak about,” I said, “especially as the beastly tree nearly did for you.”

“But can’t you see it’s broken? That’s what did it! I thought I slipped, and if I had I shouldn’t have been made of the stuff for a bushranger; but the wretched branch broke, and that is jolly different. That wasn’t my fault. The most hardened old hand must have come down then. In fact, he couldn’t have stopped up. Oh, what a lot of misery I’d have been saved through all these weeks if I’d known it broke in a natural sort of way!”

He got an awful deal of comfort out of this, and said he should return to his old



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ways again as soon as he could run a mile without stopping. And we found his lead mask, like Ned Kelly's, just where it had dropped when he had rolled over in the fern, and he welcomed it like a dog.

That's the end, except that his father did write to Dunston about Frenchy; and Dunston, not being very keen about Frenchy himself, seemed to think he would be just the chap for the girls of Freckles's father. Anyway, he went, and he cried when he said good-bye to the school; and Freckles told me that when he said good-bye to him he yelled with crying, and blessed him both in French and English, and said that the sunny atmosphere of Australia would very likely prolong his life until he had saved enough to get his bones back to France.

So he went, and Freckles went after him much sooner than he ever expected to, because the keepers finally caught him in the game preserves, sitting in his hole under the stream bank, frizzling the leg of a pheasant which he had shot out of a tree with his air-gun and buried seven days before. And Dunston wrote to his father, and his father

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wrote back that Freckles, being now fourteen and apparently having less sense than when he left Australia, had better return to his native land, and go into the wool business, and begin life as an office-boy in his place of business. Freckles told me that chaps in his father's office generally got a fortnight's holiday, but that his mother would probably work up his governor to give him three weeks. Then he would get a proper outfit and track away to the boundless scrub, and fall in with other chaps who had similar ideas, and begin to take life seriously. He said I might see his name in Australian papers in about a year. But he never wrote to me, and I don't know if he really succeeded well. I'm sure I hope he did, for he was a tidy chap, though queer.

## Concerning Corkey Minimus

### I

**I**F Corkey minor had been at school that term the thing would never have come about ; but Corkey minor was always one of the lucky chaps, and just when, in the ordinary course of events, he would have had to begin fagging for an exam., something happened to his right lung, and he had to go on an awful fine trip to Australia in a sailing ship. That left Corkey major, who was a mere learning machine in the Sixth, and Corkey minimus, who was ten, and in the Lower Fourth.

It began like this. After Bray had licked Derbyshire and Bethune, which he did one after the other on the same half-holiday, chaps gave him "best," as a matter of course, and he became cock of the lower

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school. He was solid muscle all through, and harder than stone, and he had a brother in London who was runner-up in the amateur "light-weight" championship two years following. Bray fancied himself a bit, naturally, and was always roaming about seeking fellows to punch. But once, out of bounds in a private wood, a keeper caught him and licked him, which was seen by two other fellows, and remembered against Bray afterwards when he put on too much side.

He and Corkey minimus were in the same class, because Bray, though thirteen, didn't know much. At first they were great chums, and Bray bossed Corkey and palled with him; and when Browne, the under mathematical master, told Corkey minimus that he was "the least of all the Corkeys, and not worthy to be called a Corkey," because he couldn't do rule-of-three, or some rot, Bray said a thing that Browne overheard, and got sent up. But by degrees the friendship of Bray and Corkey minimus cooled off, and the matter of Milly settled it.

The Doctor had four daughters, and Milly was the youngest. Mabel and Ethel held

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no dealings with any fellows under the Sixth, and Mary had something wrong with her spine and didn't count. But I never cared for any of them myself, because you couldn't tell what they meant. Beatrice, for instance, was absolutely engaged to Morris, for he told his sister so in the holidays, and his sister told Morris minor, and he told me the next term. Morris was the head of the school, and he had her photograph fixed into a foreign nut which he wore on his watch-chain. But when he left, and she found out he was gone into a bank at £80 a year, she dropped him like a spider. Mind you, Morris had told her he was descended, on his mother's side, from a race of old Irish kings, which may have unsettled her. Anyway, when she found he came, on his father's side, from a race of church curates, she wrote and said it was off.

But there were other things that upset the chumming of Bray and Corkey minimus before the Milly row, and they ought to be taken in turn. First, there was the Old Testament prize, which was the only thing Bray had the ghost of a chance of get-

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ting. But Corkey beat him by twenty-three marks ; and Bray said afterwards that Corkey had cribbed a lot of stuff about Joshua, and Corkey said he hadn't, and even declared he knew as much about Joshua as Bray, and a bit over. Then, on top of that, came the match with neckties, which was rather a rum match in its way. Both of them used to be awfully swagger about their neckties, and each fancied his own. So one bet the other half a crown he would wear a different necktie every day for a month. The month being June, that meant thirty different neckties each, and the chap who wore the best neckties would win. A fellow called Fowle was judge, being the son of an artist ; and neither Bray nor Corkey was allowed to buy a single new tie or add to the stock he had in his box. At the end of a fortnight they stood about equal, though Corkey's ties were rather more artistic than Bray's, which were chiefly yellow and spotted. But then came an awful falling away, and some of the affairs they wore were simply weird. The test for these was if the tie passed in class. Then the terms of the match were altered,

## Concerning Corkey Minimus

and they decided to go on wearing different things till one or other was stopped by a master. Any concern not noticed was considered a necktie "in the ordinary acceptance of that term," as Fowle put it. At the end of the third week Corkey minimus came out in an umbrella cover done in a sailor's knot, but nobody worth mentioning spotted it; and the next day Bray wore a bit of blue ribbon off a chocolate box, which also passed. They struggled on this sort of way till Bray got bowled over. I think Corkey was wearing a yard-measure dipped in red ink that morning, but it looked rather swagger than not. Class was just ended, when old Briggs, of all people—a man who wore two pairs of spectacles at one time very often—said to Bray :

"What is that round your neck, boy?"

And Bray said :

"My tie, sir."

Then Briggs said :

"Is it, sir? Let me see it, please. I have noticed an increasing disorder about your neck arrangements for a week past. You insult me and you insult the class

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by appearing here in these ridiculous ties."

"It sha'n't happen again, sir," said Bray, trying to edge out of the class-room.

"No, Bray, it shall not," said old Briggs. "Bring me that thing at once, please."

Bray handed it up, and Briggs examined it as if it was a botanical specimen or something.

"This," he announced, "is not a necktie at all. You're wearing a piece of Brussels carpet, wretched boy—a fragment of the new carpet laid down yesterday in the Doctor's study. You will kindly take it to him immediately, say who sent you, and state the purpose to which you were putting it."

So Bray, by the terms of the match, lost, and Corkey minimus won with the yard measure.

Then the feeling between them grew, especially after Bray said that he could only pay his half-crown in instalments of a penny a week.

Now we come to Milly. You see she was Corkey minor's great pal the term before, but now that he was at sea, and thousands



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of miles off, she chucked him and turned to Corkey minimus. That shows what she was really. Anyway, in a bad moment for young Corkey, she told him he had eyes like an eagle's, and it simply turned his head. As an eagle's eyes are yellow, I couldn't see myself what there was to be so jolly pleased about; but he was, and, to show you what a chap may come to if a girl collars him, I know for a fact that Corkey minimus tried to paint a picture for her. Whether he actually succeeded I cannot say, but he went down four places in class, and got awfully dropped on by Browne.

Then came that attempt of Bray to cut Corkey out, and, being myself a tremendous personal chum of Corkey's, I wished he had succeeded; but he didn't, and even his fighting didn't take Milly. After a month of giving her things to eat and so on, he said it was his red hair that stood between them, and told Fowle he didn't care a straw about her; but from the way he went on to Corkey minimus, any fool could see he really cared a lot. The chap called Fowle comes in here. This "obscene Fowle," as

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we called him out of Virgil, being really a term in a crib applied to harpies, though he would have run if a mouse had squeaked at him, was yet responsible for more fights than any fellow in the school. He sneaked about, asking chaps if they gave one another "best," and when at last he found two who didn't funk each other, though they might be perfectly good friends, he never rested until there was a fight. He got kicked sometimes, but not enough. That was owing to the fact that his hampers from home were most extraordinary. They came on Roman feast days, because he was a Roman Catholic by religion; and some fellows even said the more you kicked Fowle the more you were likely to get from the hampers. That was rot, of course, and a jolly suspicious thing happened once. Newnes—a chap in the lower Fifth—kicked Fowle the very morning before a hamper came; and that same evening, after prayers, Fowle gave Newnes about half a whacking big melon, and the next day Newnes jolly near died. Fowle swore he hadn't put anything in the melon, but it is bosh to say

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that half a melon, if it's all right, is going to do a chap any harm. Anyway, we rather funk'd Fowle's hampers afterwards.

Well, this wretched, obscene Fowle met me one day licking his fat lips and showing great excitement. So I knew he'd probably worked up a fight; but it wasn't that, though something worse. He said:

"Where's Corkey minimus? Bray wants him."

"What for?" I said. I may mention that I am called McInnes.

"As a matter of fact, he's heard something, and he says, though he's sorry, he's got to lick Corkey."

Fowle smacked his beastly mouth as if he'd got pine-apple drops in it.

"What's Corkey done?" I said.

"It's about Milly Dunston. Young Corkey talks jolly big with her, and doesn't even speak civil of his friends. By quite an accident I was passing through the shrubbery from Browne's house to the chapel yesterday, and I went by the summer-house, which is out of bounds, and couldn't help overhearing Milly and Corkey minimus, who

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were there. And Corkey distinctly said that Bray was as fiery as his hair, and that he had no more control of himself than a burning mountain; and Milly laughed."

"And you sneaked off and told Bray?"

"As his chum I had to."

"Ah, then I shall tell Corkey what you heard, being his chum."

"I shouldn't," said Fowle. "It's only making mischief. Besides, Bray won't take an apology now. He says he's stood all that flesh and blood can stand. Those were his very words. In fact, I'm looking for Corkey minimus at this moment to tell him that Bray wants him up in the 'gym.'"

"To lick him?"

Fowle smacked his lips again.

"He's brought it on himself."

"Well," I said, "I'll give the message. You can go back and tell Bray you've told me."

"I'd rather have done it myself," said Fowle, regretfully, as though he was being robbed of tuck.

"Well, you won't," I answered him, being pretty sick with the worm of a chap by that

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time. "You go back and say that Corkey will turn up in ten minutes."

Then he cleared out reluctantly, leaving this tremendous responsibility entirely on my hands.

### II

I went off there and then for Corkey. It's a bit of a jar for a chap to get a message like that unexpectedly, and I didn't know what advice to give. Corkey major was no good. If I'd told him he would have blinked through his goggles and have said some bosh—very likely in Latin. And Corkey minor, being thousands of miles away, it looked blue, because you can't ask anybody but a chap's own brothers to take up a matter like this. I couldn't lick Bray myself, or I would have.

The next minute I met Corkey himself, and, from an awful rum look about him, I thought for a moment he'd had the licking already. But he hadn't, and before I could speak he said :

"McInnes, I've got to fight Bray."

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“My dear chap, you couldn’t,” I began.

“I know,” he answered, “but I’ve got to. Things have happened. Listen to this. I’ve just left Milly, and she’s in a frightful bate. I shouldn’t have thought a girl could have got in such a rage without hurting herself. Bray told Fowle that there were as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it—meaning Milly; and Fowle wrote it on a bit of paper and dropped it where Milly was bound to see it. He didn’t put his name, but she knows his writing. Now she’s pretty well mad, and says it’s a disgrace that a thick-necked, speckly, stumpy chap like Bray should be cock of the lower school. Well, I said, very likely it was, but I didn’t see how it could be helped, him being such a fighter. Then she tossed her hair about, and said, ‘I won’t have anything more to do with the lower school at all while he’s cock of it.’ Of course, I didn’t think she included me, being—well, her greatest pal alive since Corkey minor went. So I said, ‘Quite right; I shouldn’t look at them.’ Then she turned round rather suddenly and said *I* was included. So I said, ‘I should be only too glad to fight

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him if there was a ghost of a chance, but there isn't. It's no good pretending. He's four inches taller, and miles more round the chest and round the arms, and ages older. In fact, he could lick me with one hand tied behind him.' Then she said, 'The days of chivalry are dead,' which she'd got out of a book, of course; and she added that she was tired of all boys, and that a chap with eyes like mine ought to have more 'devil' in him. Yes, she used that word. I said, 'What do you want me to do?' And she said, 'Oh, nothing. I wouldn't have a hair of your head singed for the world; only I thought that it might interest you more than other people to know I'd been insulted. Of course, if it's nothing to you—' Then she stopped and marched away, and I went after her and asked her to explain, and she answered that the explanation ought to come from me. She said, 'D' you ever read dragon stories?' And I said, 'Yes.' Then she went on, 'Well, in all the ones I've read, if a lady asked anybody to kill a dragon, the person didn't say that the dragon could beat him with one paw tied behind it, even though he thought

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so ; but he jolly well went and did the best he could.' Naturally, after that I saw what she meant, and I said, ' Oh, all right, Milly ; of course, if you've been insulted, I must make the beggar apologize—or try to.' ' Yes,' she said, cheering up like anything ; ' you are my own precious champion, and I love you.' I tell you all this because you're my chum, and you'll have to be my second. And if I can even black his eye before he settles me, it will be something."

" Well, I call it a chouse," I said. " She might as well have asked you to fight Blanchard or Sims. Look at your arms, not to mention anything else ; they're like cabbage-stalks."

" Yes, I know all that," said Corkey minus, " and it 'll be rather rotten for her if he kills me. But the thing's got to be done, and the sooner it's over the better."

Then I suddenly remembered Bray's message, and told Corkey. He seemed surprised.

" He can't lick me on the spot if I challenge him to fight in a regular way, can he ?" he asked, but rather doubtfully.

I said it seemed to me he couldn't. Then



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we went up to the "gym," where Bray was talking to about four chaps, including Fowle.

"Oh, you've come, you kid, have you? You'd better not keep me waiting another time when I send for you," he began. "Now I'm going to lick you for cheek."

"What cheek?" Corkey minimus said.

"Fowle heard you say I was as fiery as my hair."

"Oh, Fowle, he hears a lot, I know."

"Did you say it or didn't you?"

"Yes, I did, and I say it again; and you're a dirty bully too."

Bray came quite close to Corkey minimus, and put his face so near that their noses were almost touching, like cats do when they're going to have a row on a wall.

"Say that just once more if it isn't troubling you too much," said Bray.

"I'll say it as often as you like," answered young Corkey, keeping his eye on Bray's, "and I'll say another thing too, which is, that before you talk so big about me being a 'kid' and licking me, you'd better find out first if I give you 'best.'"

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“Golly!” said Bray, grinning like mad, “don’t you?”

“No, I don’t; and I’ll fight you properly with seconds the first minute we can.”

Corkey minimus had certainly come out of it fine so far, and I only wished he could fight as well as he talked. Of course, from Bray’s point of view, it was the best thing that could have happened, because now he had a right to lick Corkey, and a right to lick him as badly as he could. The bell rang a minute afterwards, and going in it was settled the fight should come off next Wednesday, that being a half-holiday. Part of Merivale Woods skirted the cricket-field, and as the second eleven, to which Bray belonged, wasn’t playing a match, everything suited very comfortably. Blanchard, the cock of the school, agreed to umpire, and he and another chap in the Fifth very kindly promised to carry young Corkey home by a secluded way if he was too much smashed to walk. Fowle seconded Bray, and I saw Bray teaching him how to fan with a towel and spurt water over a fellow’s face between

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the rounds. Of course, it was about as good fun as killing rats with a stick for Bray.

### III

Corkey minimus saw Milly once or twice before the fight, and he said he couldn't make out whether she was going mad or what. One minute she wanted him to fight, the next she implored him not to; one minute she hoped he would mutilate Bray to pieces, the next she blubbed and prayed him if ever he had any liking for her to give Bray "best." She said she kept dreaming of him brought back stark and stiff; and then, when he began to think she meant it, she called him her "knight" and her "hero" and her "King Arthur" and other frightful rot, and actually wanted him to wear one of her Sunday gloves under his shirt at the time of fighting! Corkey minimus said he very likely wouldn't wear a shirt; and then she thought he might hang it—I mean the glove—round his neck by a bit of string!

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“Blessed if I shall ever feel quite the same to her after this,” said Corkey.

“It seems rather rough to get broken up for life to please a skimpy girl,” I said. Then he burst out as red in the face as an apple, and told me he would not hear a word against Milly, so I dried up.

There were three days before the fight, and Corkey minimus trained for it, and gave away his pudding at dinner in exchange for the meat of the chaps who sat next to him. But you can’t get your muscle up in a day or two like that, and it only made him awfully thirsty.

The day came at last, and I may as well go on to the fight itself. The First were having a big match on our own ground, so nobody paid any attention to us, and we arranged a game that should have Corkey, Bray, and me on the same side. Then, when our chaps were in, we three sneaked away into the plantations, behind some holly-trees and a woodstack. Bray arranged all the preliminaries as cheerful as a bird, and Blanchard said they were right. They marked out a ring and ran a string round

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and arranged corners for the seconds ; and I saw that the obscene Fowle had towels and bottles of water and a basin—all, of course, for Bray between the rounds. Corkey minimus was rather waxy with me for not bringing the same for him ; but I'd brought a sponge, which I know is a thing a second chucks up in the air when his man is done for ; and I explained and showed it to Corkey ; and he thanked me and said he supposed that was about the only thing he should want. Blanchard said the rounds were to be two minutes long each, and Bray grumbled because they ought by rights to be three. But Blanchard told him to shut up and begin. When we saw Bray take his shirt off I told Corkey he ought to, and he did. Then Blanchard laughed and said :

“By gum ! they peel rather different !”

Bray was like a barrel, with muscles a lot bigger than hen's eggs on his arms. Corkey minimus seemed to be all ribs somehow, with arms about as lean as rulers. I told him to keep moving about and try and puff Bray a bit if he had time, and he said :

“All right, I'll try. If I can get a smack

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at his face, so as to black an eye or something, and show I've hit him before he does for me, I don't care."

I will say for Corkey minimus that he had about the best pluck I ever saw in a chap. He was quite calm, and just his usual color; and when Bray tossed him for corners Corkey won; and Blanchard said I picked the right corner for him. Then he told them to fight fair, and said "Time!"

I'd prayed Corkey to try and surprise Bray at the very start if he could, and have a hit at Bray's face the moment they began. And I'm blessed if he didn't go and do it! Bray began fiddling about jolly scientifically with his hands, and I fancy he just squinted down to see if his feet were scientific too. At the same moment Corkey buzzed round his right and let Bray have it fairly on the nose. Bray jumped and looked about as much surprised as if he'd been struck by lightning; and Blanchard said:

"First blood for Corkey minimus!"

I yelled—I oughtn't to have, but I did—because to see blood dropping about on

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Bray's chest was a fine sight. He sniffed and went for Corkey smiling. The smile was the beastliest part of it, for I hoped he would have got his wool off a bit and been wild. But he wasn't, and when he began to hit, Corkey got flustered and swung about like a windmill and caught it pretty hot. Yet he jerked his head so jolly quick that he didn't get more than about four smacks on it in the first round, though his body, which was white by nature, was pretty soon covered with red marks. He said they didn't hurt, and I cleaned him up and blew water over him at the end of the round. His lip was bleeding like mad, but luckily inside, where his tooth had cut it; and he swallowed all the blood, so nobody knew; besides which the blood wasn't lost. Bray flung himself down in his corner, and Fowle looked after him; and even at a solemn time like that I laughed, and so did Corkey minimus, because Fowle tried to be too clever, and spurted a lot of water out of his mouth into Bray's eye. Then Bray told him that after the fight he'd tie him in knots and kick him, looking forward to

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which, of course, wrecked Fowle's enjoyment entirely.

Blanchard said "Time!" again awfully soon, and I saw Bray meant settling Corkey now, because his reputation as a fighter was at stake, and he knew Corkey hoped to get through three rounds with luck. So Bray began hitting him like hammers, and though I was about as sorry for Corkey minimus as a chap could be, nobody would have been able to help admiring the way Bray hit. It was just at the end of this round, when Corkey had been knocked down once, but got up again, that the awful rum thing with Milly Dunston happened.

Suddenly, without any warning, there was a noise like fowls getting up a hedge, and she rushed out from behind the woodstack with her eyes blazing and her hair streaming like a comet in a bate. She'd been running a good way, I should think, and she tore right into the ring straight at Bray, and not trusting to words at a time like that, and not remembering her father was a clergyman, or anything, slapped his face both sides, and jolly hard too. Bray swore the



## Concerning Corkey Minimus

horriblest words I ever heard used by a chap, because she'd given him more in half a second than Corkey could have in a year. Then he got into his shirt upside-down and hooked it with Fowle, but not before he heard her say:

“You little, fat, red-headed coward to fight and try and murder a boy half your age and size! I wish I could kill you, I do. It's shameful to think you're an English boy at all!”

Then she turned on the chaps from the Fifth, and told Blanchard he was a disgrace to the school. So they cleared out too; and then she cried over Corkey, and said she would rather have been torn to pieces by unchained monsters than have let him be mangled like he was. And Corkey, who was pretty well dazed, forgave her, and told her kindly to go away. And she gasped and gurgled, and went.

I took Corkey back, and one or two things got to be known. It came out that Fowle had told Milly the place and the hour of the fight, but only after she had sworn—on some rotten saint Fowle knew—that she would not

## The Human Boy

tell a single soul about it. She kept her swear all right, but came herself. And when Bray got to hear how it was she came—of course, thinking Corkey had told her, which he would rather have died than do—then Bray tried a lot of Chinese tortures on Fowle that he'd seen at a wax-works. And chaps who saw it said that Fowle was so excited at the time that he called upon about twenty different well-known Bible characters by name to come and help him and destroy Bray. But they didn't.

As for Corkey minimus, the things he got from Milly after that fight you wouldn't believe. There were bottles of stuff to rub bruises with, and lozenges and grapes, and some muck for his eye, and little baskets of strawberries, and jolly books and rose-buds. She told the Doctor about slapping Bray's face, and wrote a long letter of apology afterwards; and a week later she broke it to Corkey minimus that she was going to a boarding-school herself next term; which she did.

When Corkey told me about it he added:

“And she's going to write me letters, be-

## Concerning Corkey Minimus

cause she's said several times that there's only one chap in the world for her now, and I'm the chap."

"I shouldn't think she could change her mind after all that's happened," I said.

And Corkey minimus said :

"I bet she will when Corkey minor turns up again, especially if he brings rum things with him from Australia. And you needn't repeat it, but to you, McInnes, as my chum, I say that I don't care how soon he does come back either."

Which showed that there was more sense in Corkey minimus than you might have thought.

## The Piebald Rat

**I**T was all the result of old Briggs asking the Doctor if he might “instil the lads with a wholesome fondness for natural history.” That’s how he put it, because I heard him ; and the Doctor said it was an admirable notion, and would very probably keep some boys out of mischief on half-holidays. It also kept some boys out of bounds on half-holidays ; and after a time I think the Doctor was pretty savage with old Briggs, and wished he’d stuck to his regular work, which was writing and drawing and such like ; because, when one or two of the chaps really got keen about natural history, and even chucked cricket for butterflies and beetles, others, who didn’t care a straw about it, pretended they did to gain their own ends. And it was these chaps, if you understand, who finally made the Doctor so

## The Piebald Rat

sick with natural history generally and old Briggs for starting it.

My chum, West, began the rage for study of "our humble relations," as old Briggs called everything down to wood-lice. He let it be generally known that he had two live lizards in his desk ; and, this being the best thing that West had ever thought of, the idea caught on well. I had a dormouse myself, my name being Ashby minor, and Ashby major kept a spider pretty nearly as big as a young bird, which he had poked out of a hole in the playground wall. He caged it in a tin match-box, and fed it with blue-bottles and wasps. At least, he got blue-bottles and wasps for it, but the fool wouldn't eat them ; and after a week he found it with its legs all tucked up as neatly as anything. Only it was dead. I thought the match-box must have been too tight a fit for it, but Ashby major did not. He believed there was something about a tin match-box which must be rather poisonous for out-door spiders.

Then chaps went on collecting till it got to be swagger to keep big live things in your

## The Human Boy

desk ; and the bigger the thing the more swagger it was.

Maine, generally known as Freckles, had a couple of guinea-pigs in his desk for a week. Then Mannering, the classical master in the Fifth, who must have had a nose like a gimlet, smelt them at prayers, happening to come in late and kneeling down by Freckles at the time. The Doctor didn't make much fuss then, because that was just at the beginning of the business ; only he said a desk was not the place for guinea-pigs, and added that a chap in Freckles's position in the school ought to have known it. He let the gardener look after them from that time forward. But Freckles naturally lost all interest in them after the gardener had them ; because a guinea-pig merely *as* a guinea-pig is nothing. Anyhow, it was rough on him to be landed over it, because, as a matter of fact, guinea-pigs have no scent worth mentioning, and nobody but Mannering would have spotted them. After that Gideon and Brookes caught a blind-worm one foot two inches long ; and Gideon sold his half for fivepence, so Brookes got

## The Piebald Rat

it all. Nobody knew what a blind-worm likes to eat, unfortunately, and it died, but not for a fortnight. Then there was another scene with my dormouse, which led to tremendous things. There's a hole in a desk where the ink-pot goes in, and one day my mouse got out through it, having climbed up two dictionaries and a Greek Testament to do so. It happened old Briggs himself was taking the Lower Fourth, which is my class, and I hoped it would be all right. But he didn't seem friendly over it, and I noticed, when he told us to find the mouse, he put his feet upon the rungs of his chair. It's a rum thing about old Briggs that he doesn't care much for natural history objects while they're alive; he likes them dead and dried, or stuffed and pinned on cards, or in glass cases all labelled and neat. My dormouse gave us a jolly good hunt round, then it finally tripped over a lead-pencil and got its tail and hind legs into West's ink. So we caught it, and I was drying it with a piece of blotting-paper, and old Briggs was just telling us that dormice belong to a genus of rodents called *Myoxus*, and are allied to

## The Human Boy

mice, though they have a squirrel's habits, which he seemed to think was a pity, when Dunston came in. The Doctor asked particulars, looked as if he could have jolly well killed my mouse, which was shivering rather badly owing to the ink on its hinder parts, and said once for all that he would allow no animals of any kind inside any of the desks or in school.

Then, unluckily, as an afterthought, he demanded a clearance on the spot; and he was pretty well staggered to find the result.

"I will ask you, Ferrars, as head boy of the class, and one, I am happy to think, above any of this childish folly, to inspect the desks, one by one, and report to me where you find indications of life," said the Doctor.

Ferrars is always right with the Doctor, chiefly because he has a face like a stone angel in church, and a very smooth voice, and a remarkably swagger knowledge of the Scriptures. He is also a tremendous worker, and will go into the Upper Fourth next term as sure as eggs. It was jolly awkward for Ferrars then, because he happened to be one



## The Piebald Rat

of the keenest natural history chaps of all, and had a piebald rat, which even fellows in the Sixth had offered him half-a-crown and three shillings for, yet he would not part with it. So, though we didn't like him much, we felt almost sorry for the fix he was in now. Of course, we thought that such a demon on Religious Knowledge as Ferrars would drag out his piebald rat right away, and perhaps even give it to the Doctor, or offer to sell it for the alms-box ; but he didn't. He got up, rather white about the gills, and opened the desks one by one ; and a jolly happy family it was. Only the Doctor scattered the things to the four winds, till there wasn't an atom of natural history left in the whole classroom except Ferrars's piebald rat, snug in his desk.

First Fowle, who goes in for water things, had to empty his jam-jar of tadpoles out into the playground, which was a beastly cruel thing to make him do, because they all died, still being in the gill stage ; then Freckles was sent off with a young rabbit to the hay-field, and he got caned too, because, strangely enough, the Doctor hadn't for-

## The Human Boy

gotten his guinea-pigs ; and Marrant's two sparrows were let go, which was no kindness to them, because Marrant had cut their wings so jolly short it would have taken them months to grow enough feathers to fly with, and meantime a cat got them both ; and Playfair's mole, which, by-the-way, had been queer for some time, owing to having no earth to burrow in, was ordered to be sent to the cricket-field. There were a lot of other things, but Corkey minimus scored rather, because his goat-sucker moth laid a hundred and fourteen eggs on Todhunter's algebra a few hours before it was let free. Corkey minimus says a goat-sucker moth's nothing worth mentioning after it's laid eggs, but the eggs turn into fine caterpillars.

The few things the Doctor didn't know what to do with, and didn't like to have killed, he said must be given to the gardener. He thought it would be better to put my mouse out of its misery, and turned it over on my hand with a gold pencil-case, and said it had probably got a chill to its vital organs and would die ; but old Briggs explained that it might live if put

## The Piebald Rat

in cotton-wool ; so the gardener looked to it, and it did live, and I took it home at the end of that term, and have it still, though it is getting oldish now, and has lost half its tail. But it's a good mouse yet.

Of course the extraordinary thing was Ferrars. After the Doctor had gone, old Briggs, to whom he had whispered something before he went, gave out that his natural history half-hours would be suspended for the rest of the term ; then I got a word with Ferrars. I said :

“However did you have the cheek—you supposed to be such a saint?”

He said :

“I don't know. Something came over me to do it. I've got a jolly peculiar feeling to that rat. It's not an ordinary rat. I'm wrapped up in it. Even my respect for the Doctor couldn't stand against it. I know what you chaps think. I dare say you reckon I'm a hound, but I couldn't help doing what I did. Somehow that rat's a sort of 'mascotte' to me. A mascotte's a thing that brings luck. All my best luck's happened since I had it.”

## The Human Boy

Of course, when a chap goes on like that, what can you do? I didn't understand Ferrars. He seemed to me to be simply talking rot. So I said:

"Well, it's pretty measly, considering the opinion the Doctor's got of you. I sha'n't try to score off your rat, because I know it's a jolly fine one, and I like it; but Freckles or somebody will very likely kill it after this."

He looked in a fair funk when the dreadful thought of having his rat killed came to him. Before the end of that day he spoke to every chap in the class separately, and all but three promised and swore not to lay a finger on the rat. But Freckles, Murdoch, and Morrants wouldn't swear. Finally he paid Morrants sixpence and so got him over, and Murdoch he let crib off him in "prep." three times; and Freckles, who was an awfully sportsmanlike chap really, said he was only rotting all the time, and would be the last to do a classy rat like Ferrars's any harm. In fact, he said he'd much sooner kill Ferrars himself.

Mind you, though, of course, it was simply

## The Piebald Rat

barbarous for Ferrars to think that his piebald rat could have any effect on his work, yet he proved to me that his success in school and his great popularity with the Doctor dated from the coming of the thing. When he first got it, it was a mere cub-rat, so to say; now, though not a year old, it had turned into as fine a rat as you could wish to meet anywhere. In appearance it had pink eyes and a white head, and a fairish amount of white fur about the body, which got thinner on its stomach, so that you could see the pink skin through to some extent. But the piebaldness of the rat was the great feature. It had two big round patches of fur like the common or garden rat, and one small patch at the nape of its neck; and in addition to this it had one large patch of beautiful yellowish fur, such as you chiefly see on guinea-pigs. Its tail was pink and long, and quite hairless.

Ferrars often kept back good things at meals for it, and the bond between them seemed to grow rummer and rummer, till he let the rat get on his mind, and Wilson said he was getting dotty about it. Which I think

## The Human Boy

was true, for one day, going into the class-room to get a knife from my desk, I saw Ferrars with his rat out, talking to it. He was swatting like anything in play-hours for a special Old Testament history prize, and he had the rat and the Bible and various books of reference all before him. Then, not knowing I was there, he spoke :

“I must win it, ‘Mayne Reid.’ Stick to me this time, old chap, and see me through.”

He called his rat “Mayne Reid” because that was his favorite author.

And “Mayne Reid” seemed to understand, and he turned his pink eyes on to the open Bible and walked over it. Finding he’d walked over the ninth chapter of the Second Book of Kings, Ferrars got excited, and, seeing me, said, “By Jove! then I’ll learn that chapter by heart, though it is so long. It’s good, exciting stuff, anyway, and I bet my rat walking over it means that there’ll be a question about Jehu and Jezebel.”

“You’ll go cracked about that rat,” I said.

“It’s part of my life,” he answered. “I know it seems very peculiar, and so it is,

## The Piebald Rat

and I don't suppose such a thing ever happened before, but something tells me my prosperity and success is all bound up in that rat. He's a familiar spirit, in fact, like Saul had. If he died I should never do much more good, and very likely stick in this class for the rest of my days."

"You'd better not think like that," I said, "because rats are short-lived things, owing to the nasty food they eat. Not that 'Mayne Reid' has nasty food; but all pink-eyed animals are delicate, and you'll have to lose him sooner or later."

Ferrars didn't take warning by me, but after he really did win the Old Testament prize, and there really was a question about Jezebel, he made a sort of idol out of the rat, and some chaps declared he said his prayers to it. I know he constantly bought it cocoa-nut chips, which it was very fond of. He trained it, too, to live in his breast-pocket, and I often saw him glancing down in class just to get a glimpse of its little eyes looking up at him. That taking the piebald rat into class shows the lengths Ferrars ran. The whole thing was very peculiar. Some

## The Human Boy

chaps said there was a strong likeness growing up between Ferrars and the rat; and certainly his thin, white face had a rattish look sometimes. Other fellows told him his rat was an evil spirit, and would end by doing him a bad turn, but Ferrars turned upon them and jawed them with such frightful language that they never said it again. Meanwhile the Doctor went on taking to Ferrars more and more, and there seemed every chance of his getting the whole Bible by heart before he left Merivale.

Then came the end of the affair like this. Ferrars was so dependent on his rat now that he wouldn't do a lesson without it, and he lugged it fearlessly into the Doctor's study at those times, fortunately rare, when the Doctor took our class himself in Scripture. But Ferrars was such a flyer that we all got tarred with the same brush; and the Doctor, after questioning Ferrars for half an hour about Bible people we'd never even heard of, and getting a string of dead-right answers out of him, would dismiss us all in great good temper, forgetting that he'd only been having a go at one chap.



## The Piebald Rat

A day came when the Doctor left us for five minutes in the middle of this class, and while most of us had a hurried dip into the plagues of Egypt, which was the business in hand, Ferrars, who knew as much about the plagues as ever Moses did, just got out his rat and gave it a bit of almond and a short breather of a yard or so along the floor. But, the Doctor coming back suddenly, he had only just time to pop it into his pocket, and even then he put the rat into an unusual pocket which it was not accustomed to, and didn't like, namely, a trouser-pocket. Ferrars also shoved a handkerchief down in the pocket to steady the rat.

Then I saw an awful rum expression come over him, and he grabbed at the pocket and his mouth fell open, and his face got the color of new putty. At the same time I saw his eyes turn to a big bookshelf with glass doors against the side of the room.

"What's the matter, Ferrars?" said the Doctor. "You appear unwell."

"Nothing, sir; merely a little passing sickness, I think."

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“Then withdraw, my boy, and ask the matron to give you a few drops of brandy and water. You need not dine to-day,” said the Doctor, very kindly.

But Ferrars wouldn't withdraw. He knew “Mayne Reid” had got through his pocket and down his trouser-leg; he also knew it was now behind the bookshelf, and might reappear at any moment. So he said he was better, and, actually! that it would be a grief to him to miss one of the Doctor's own lessons.

But afterwards, when the rat didn't come out and the class was dismissed, Ferrars was frightful to see. His hair all got on end somehow, and his eyes swelled and stuck out of his head like glass beads, and his cheeks got hollow. He ran awful risks going into the Doctor's study that day, but the rat wouldn't come out, and Ferrars looked old enough to be a master when he went to bed, though only eleven and a half really.

“One of two things has happened,” he said to me, for we were in the same dormitory; “either it's got wedged in behind the bookshelf and will die if not let out, or

## The Piebald Rat

else there was a rat-hole there, and it went down and has joined common rats, and become a sort of king rat among them."

"Or been killed," I said.

"No, they would not kill it," he answered. "Anyway, to-morrow, after the Doctor's class is over, and everybody has gone, I shall stop and make a clean breast of it, and ask him, for the sake of humanity, to have the book-shelf moved. But it's all up with me if the rat has lost its feeling towards me and won't come back; only if it was stuck and couldn't come back, that's different."

He didn't sleep much that night, but he said some prayers, which was a thing he didn't often do; and of course he was praying that the piebald rat might be allowed to return.

But next day, after the Scripture class, in which Ferrars was not nearly so much to the front as usual, and got regularly muddled over a potty question about Jacob, the Doctor saved him the trouble of asking about his rat. He—the Doctor, I mean—had been jolly glum all through class, and when it was ended he did a rum thing,

## The Human Boy

which was awful to see, knowing all we did. He told us to keep our places, then went to the fireplace and picked up the shovel. From the face of it he removed a bit of newspaper, and under the newspaper was "Mayne Reid." His pink eyes had gone foggy, and there was a little streak of blood on his mouth. Otherwise his body looked all right.

"Now here," said the Doctor, in an awfully solemn way, "we have a dead, piebald rat. There can be no outlet for error concerning such a rat as this. To have seen such a rat is to remember it. Already three classes have been before me to-day, but nobody knew anything about this animal. That it was a tame rat its fatness and sleekness testify. Moreover, the piebald rat is an outcome of artificiality. A wild rat in a state of nature is brown or black, as the case may be. This rat, then, had an owner, and that owner brought it into my study—*my study!*—and suffered it to escape here. That I do well to be angry you will the more easily understand when I tell you that the unsavory creature was upon my desk last night, and has scratched and even eaten

## The Piebald Rat

some papers whereon were notes for my next sermon. It was discovered this morning by one of the domestics. She, seeing some object moving upon my desk, struck with the broom-handle, and destroyed this rat. Now let there be no prevarication or evasion of the questions I am going to put to you. First, I wish to know if this rat belongs, or rather belonged, to any among you ; and, secondly, I desire to learn whether, supposing the rat be not the property of any present, you happen to know whose property it is, or rather was ?”

I stole a look at Ferrars, and he appeared so frightful to see, that for some reason I thought I'd try and help him. So, like a fool, I was just going to speak when young Corkey minimus did. He said :

“ Please, sir, it might be a foreign sort of rat that came over in that box of pineapples and things that Ashby major had sent him from the West Indies.”

“ When I desire your aid in the elucidation of this problem I will apply for it, Corkey minimus,” answered the Doctor, so Corkey dried up.

## The Human Boy

Then, in a sort of voice that was strange to us, and seemed to come from his stomach or somewhere new, Ferrars spoke, and I never saw a chap look so ghastly. His eyes were fixed on the rat, and he came forward slowly.

“Please, sir, it was my rat,” he said.

“Yours, Ferrars! *You* to disobey! You, of all boys, to set my orders at defiance!”

“It wasn’t an ordinary rat, sir.”

“I can see what sort of rat it was, sir, for myself,” thundered the Doctor. “This it is to consider a boy, to devote thought to him, to particularly commend him for his theological knowledge.”

“I don’t take any credit for knowing anything now, sir. It was the rat as much as me.”

“Robert Ferrars!” said the Doctor, in his caning voice, “you are now adding wicked buffoonery to an act in itself sufficiently disreputable!”

“I can’t explain, sir; I don’t mean any buffoonery. That rat was more to me than you’d think. It—it *did* help me somehow, and now it’s dead it wouldn’t be sportsman-like to it to say not. And if you’ll let me

## The Piebald Rat

b-bury it properly, I'll be very thankful to you."

The Doctor looked at Ferrars awfully close during this speech.

"Either you are lying," he said, "or you suffer from some hysterical and neurotic condition, Robert Ferrars, which I have neither suspected nor discovered until this moment."

Then he told us to go; but Ferrars he kept for half an hour; and when Ferrars came in to dinner I saw he'd been blubbing.

He explained to me after we'd gone to bed. He said :

"No, he didn't cane me or anything. He just talked, and told me a lot about several things I didn't know, and said that familiar spirits were specially barred in the Bible. I never thought he'd have even tried to understand me; but he did, and he quite saw my side about the rat. He said kind words over it, too, and was sorry it was dead. And I've got to see Doctor Barnes to-morrow too, though, of course, it's only having my rat on my mind that's upset me. And he let me have it to b-bury gladly."

## The Human Boy

“Where shall you arrange the rat?” I said.

“I’m sending it home in a stays-box that Jane gave me. I’ve written to my sister where to bury it. Jane it was who killed it. She cried like anything when I told her what ‘Mayne Reid’ was to me. But he’s in the book-post by now, beautifully done up in shavings and fresh geranium leaves. It’s no good talking any more. Only I will say that if he was a familiar spirit, he was a jolly good one, very different to the sort barred in the Scriptures. I don’t know how I’ll get on in the exams. now. I wish I was dead, too.”

Then he sniffed a bit, and went to sleep.



## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

**T**HERE'S more stuff torked about fagging at school than anything else in the world, as far as I can see; and being the smailest boy but two at Dunston's, and a fag myself, I ought to know. Of corse, fags do get it pretty hot sometimes if they happen to fag for a beast, but big fellows aren't beasts to small ones as a general thing. I'm sure Bradwell was the best chap that ever came to Dunston's, and when he was expelled over the seege in the Wing Dormatery—him and Trelawny—I felt frightful. I'm Watson minor myself, my brother being Watson major, one of the reserves for the second eleven and captain of the third.

The thing I'm going to write out happened just before the seege, and was all over before that; and it shows what a fag can do. It also shows what a jolly good thing it is for

## The Human Boy

big fellows to treat fags well, and give them odds and ends so as to get their affecksun. If I hadn't felt what I did to Bradwell, I shouldn't have run the awful risks I did for him. What I did certinly ruined a great project of Bradwell's, and upsett him a good bit at the time. But he said afterwards, when the blow had fallen, and when he could look back and think of it without smacking my head, that I had ment well. I remember his very words, for that matter. He said, "Your intenshuns were all right—I will say that—but you've ruined my life." No chap could say farer than that; and, mind you, I did ruin his life in a way. I've heard many fellows say Bradwell was a bounder by birth; but he never was to me.

Well, Bradwell had a great admeration for Mabel Dunston, the Doctor's youngest daughter but one, and she had an equal great admeration for him, for two terms. Bradwell, although a great sportsman in other ways, was fond of girls. If he passed a school of them he would look awfully rum and reddish in the face an' watery in the

## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

eyes. Once, going with him to the playing-field for a football match, he made the distance half a mile longer by going up a side-street to avoid the high-school girls; and I asked him why, and he said it was cheek, but told me all the same. He said, "You can't meet women got up like this." Bradwell has frightfully thin calves to his legs when seen in "knickers," though he is the best goalkeeper that was ever known at Dunston's. Of course, his affair with Mabel Dunston would never have got to be known by me but for my great use to Bradwell in carrying notes. Being in the Doctor's house that term I was easily able to do this, and there was a jar of green stuff in the hall where she told me to leave the notes, which I did. She was fifteen, I believe, or else sixteen, but well on in years anyway, and a few months older than Bradwell. It was his general brilliance won her, for he could do anything, and his father had plenty of money, being a man like Whitely's in London, only in the North of England. Bradwell drew almost as well as pictures in books, and he used to illustrate the Latin grammar for his special

## The Human Boy

chums. There's a part of the Latin grammar called Syntax, which I haven't come to yet myself, but it has rather rummy things in it, with both the Latin and English of them. And Bradwell used to illustrate these things; and he illustrated two in my grammar out of puer kindness to me. One was, "Balbus is crowning the boy's head with a garland"; and the other was, "A snake appeared to Sulla while sacrificing"; and you never saw anything better. They were done on the margin in ink, and the snake appearing to Sulla was about the queerest and best thing even seen in a Latin grammar.

I have to tell you this because such a lot happened owing to it.

Now Browne took my class, which is the lowest in the school, and I am seventh in it. And I gradually got to hate Browne, because Bradwell did, and for other reeasons of my own to. Browne was said to be only twenty-two, and he looked younger than many of the chaps, his moustashe being whitish and invisibel to the eye. He wore necktyes which I remember hearing Mathers say were an insult to nature, and would

## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

have made a rainbow curl up and faint. We always noticed, at arithmetic times, that Browne, if he got a stumper, would put up the lid of his private desk and hide behind it—of course, looking the thing up in his crib. Then he would wander round, as if by accident, to the chap and do the sum off quick while he remembered it. Bradwell always hated him; and when he found that Browne was very friendly with Mabel and Mabel was very friendly with Browne, he hated him far, far worse.

Bradwell and this girl had a row in the shrubbery at the back of the chapel, and I, being in the gardener's potting-shed at the time, feeding a cattipiller of mine, heard it. Bradwell said:

“I'm not blind, Mabel, I've seen it going on ever since last term. You read his beastly books, and leave rosebuds with scented verbenas round them in that stone urn at the gate when he comes down from his house to class.”

And she said:

“And why shouldn't I? You must remember, please, that I am my own mistress.

## The Human Boy

Besides, the intelligents of a grown-up man is very refreshing."

For some reason Bradwell didn't like this. His voice squeaked up into his head in a rather rum way when he answered :

"D'you call *him* a man? He hasn't got a muscle on him ; and he doesn't know more than enough to teach the kids."

"That's merely mean jellousy," said Mabel. "Of course, he doesn't talk to *you*, or show you what is in him. But he tells me all about his secret life, and very butiful it is. He is a jenius, in fact."

"If it comes to that, what can he do?" said Bradwell, awfully cleverly. "Can he draw?"

"No, he doesn't draw."

"Oh ! can he sing?"

"No."

"Can he play the piano?"

"No."

Now all of these things Bradwell could do to perfecksun, so he got cheerfuller and cheerfuller.

"What *can* he do, then, besides jaw the kids and always sneak to the Doctor?"

## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

“I never saw such jellousy as this,” said Mabel; “but if you must know I’ll tell you what he can do: he can write poetry out of his own head, and he has got a solid book of it reddy to print some day—there!”

I suppose Bradwell couldn’t write poetry. Anyway, he got very down in the face at this. He didn’t say anything—appeering to be frightfully shocked at what he’d heard. Then Mabel said:

“When you can quote Browning and Byron and Shelley, and write poems yourself, it will be soon enough to sneer at Mr. Browne.”

“You love him,” said Bradwell, in a very tragik voice.

“I don’t love anybody but my own family,” said Mabel; “but I admire him, and I admire his poetry, which is very much out of the common indeed.”

“It’s all over then, I suppose,” said Bradwell.

“I don’t know what you mean,” she replied to him. “A thing that has never begun can’t be all over”; which words of Mabel’s seemed to knock the heart out of Bradwell.

## The Human Boy

Then the gardener came along, and I didn't hear anything else. Of corse, I couldn't *help* hearing what I had done, though I tried hard not to, and kept feeding my catterpeller like anything all the time.

Two days after I had to carry another note to Mabel, and found one waiting for Bradwell in the usual place ; so they must have made it up. Then came the beginning of my misforchunes with Browne. He found the snake appeering to Sulla in my Latin grammar, and called me up and said he knew very well I hadn't drawn it myself, but wanted to know who had. He said it was wrong to the Doctor to ruin our books, and that he had seen in several different books the same snake, evidently done by the same boy, owing to them being so much similar.

But the very identical thing had happened in another class—to Steggles, Bradwell having drawn him the same picture ; and knowing what Steggles said, being a chap who is frightfully cunning, I said the same now to Browne. I said I left the book



## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

on my desk, and somebody came along and done it while I was out of the room. Browne seemed inclined not to believe this. Anyway, he took the Latin grammar away with him. But I heard no more about it till the next evening, when I wanted the book in prep. Remembering Browne had it, I went off to his study and knocked and walked in.

Browne wasn't there for the moment, and the room was empty. I took the opportunity to look at a rather butiful tobacco-jar of Browne's which I have seen at a distance on his mantlepice many times. Passing his table to get to it, I chanced to glance there, and juge of my surprise when the first words I saw at the top of a big sheet of paper were, "To Mabel"! Underneeth was a lot of writing, and the whole table seemed to be littered with paper covered with small bits of separate writing, much of it scratched out and done over again. But the piece with "To Mabel" at the top was all butiful and clean, without anything scratched, being, I suppose, the result of all the other bits put together and neetly copied out.

Well, there I was with my duty towards

## The Human Boy

Bradwell as his fag. Browne had evidently done a verse out of his own head for Mabel Dunston, and had written it in this butiful style, on thick white paper, to send to her. I felt if she got it, knowing what she'd said to Bradwell about Browne, that it was certin she would abandon Bradwell, him not being any good at poems. I wouldn't have done it for anybody else in the world *but* Bradwell; I wouldn't have done it at all if I had known what the end of it was going to be; but, anyway, at the time it seemed to me, as Bradwell's fag, I ought to do it; so I did.

I took the poem and rolled it up so as not to hurt it, and hooked off to Bradwell. He was in his study, and Trelawny, who shares it with him, being out of the room, I was able to explain. I said:

“If you please, Bradwell, I've come from Mr. Browne's study, and he was not there, and happening by a curious axcident to glance on the table I saw this. Knowing about you and Mabel, and being your fag, I took it.”

“Took what?” said Bradwell.

## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

I put the thing in front of him, and he got red and excited.

"It's a poem to Mabel by that beast Browne," he said.

Then he read it out, half to himself, but I heard. The thing ran like this :

### "TO MABEL

"Oh let my Muse sing to the name of Mabel,  
Whose azure eyes are fastened to my soul,  
Like to forget-me-nots in button-hole.  
To tell of my heart's torment I'm unable.  
My thoughts they spin ; my brain it grows unstable  
When fixed on Thee. Perchance it is my rôle  
Never to reach my mad ambition's Goal,  
But to live ever 'midst scholastic babel.  
Thy glances brighten all my lonely lot.  
Prometheus-like a vulture gnaws my heart,  
In biting blasts and under sunshine hot.  
My dreams are shattered by a barbed dart,  
And, waking wild, I scream that I may not  
Whisper the oaths I yearn to Thee impart."

I told Bradwell I didn't quite understand it, and he sat on me.

"You wouldn't," he said, "a kid like you. But I do. It's a sonnit, and an extramly

## The Human Boy

fine one. I *hate* the chap, but it's no good pretending he's not a poet, because this jolly well proves he is. Look at the rimes and the smoothness !”

It seemed a heroik thing of Bradwell to say that, feeling as he did to Browne. He thought for a bit, but told me not to go.

“Of corse,” he said, “this must be returned. All's fair in—in a case of this kind, but—”

Then he thought very deeply and read the sonnit again. Suddenly he took a bit of paper and copied down Browne's poem word for word. Then he told me to cut back like lightning to Browne's study, and to put the poem back on his desk if I could—if not, to most carefully keep it till the first chance of getting it back to Browne's room without being spotted.

“You're a splendid fag,” he said, “and I shan't forget this. It's the sort of thing that squires did for their knights in olden times ; and they got good rewards too. Now hook it.”

It's worth a lot, mind you, to get praise like that from such a chap as Bradwell.

## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

When I got back, Browne was rumaging over his table and sweering a good deal in a loud wisper. He told me to wait a minute, and went off to look in his bedroom. Then I seezed my opportunity, and slipped the sonnit on his table under some papers. When he came back he was worried, and went on hunting till he found it. Then he said "Ah!" to himself, and got pleasanter and asked me what I wanted. I told him my Latin grammar, and, being in a very happy state now, owing to finding the poem, he gave my book back and told me to clear out; which I did.

After prep. I met Bradwell going in to prayers, and he handed me a note for Mabel to put in the usual place. He looked awfully rum when he gave it to me, and he saw that I saw he looked rum. So he said:

"I don't mind letting you know, owing to your being such a good fag and my trusting you as I do. You may read the letter in prayers, then seal it down and put it behind the pot of ferns in the hall in the usual place."

Of corse, it wasn't really a letter, or

## The Human Boy

Bradwell wouldn't have let me read it. It was just Browne's sonnet copied out by Bradwell word for word; and at the bottom where the words, "What about poetry now? —A. T. B." A. T. B. are Bradwell's initials, his full name being Arthur Thomas Bradwell. You see, he didn't exactly say he'd *written* the sonnet. He only said, "What about poetry now?"

The excitement of it all kept me awake for hours and hours through the night. I don't suppose any fag ever did more for a big fellow than I had done for Bradwell that day. Then I began to wonder when Browne would send off his poem, and whether Mabel would get them both together or one at a time. You see, of course, Browne would send her the thing as original, and there was nothing in Bradwell's letter to exactly say he hadn't written it; and puzzling the thing out for hours and hours, I at last came to the conclusion that she would find it very difficult which to believe, because how could she know which was telling the truth to her? Then, about three or four in the morning almost, I began to feel rather

## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

terrible over it, because I thought of what frightful trouble Browne must have had to write the sonnet. He might have taken terms and terms over it for all I could tell, not, of course, knowing myself how long it took to write poetry. I felt rather sorry for Browne; but after all a chap's duty is to the fellow he fags for before masters; and feeling that, I went to sleep.

Three days later Bradwell had me in his room and told me the end of it all, which shows that a girl never does what you might expect.

"As a lesson to you, young Watson," said Bradwell, "I may tell you that my career has been utterly blighted and my life ruined by that business of the sonnet."

I said I was sorry to hear it.

He said :

"Yes, blighted; and so's his — I mean Browne's. She got my letter that night and his next morning. That night she felt all her old feeling for me return because of the sonnet, thinking I'd done it. Then, next morning, she got just the very same stuff to a word from Browne, with a letter

## The Human Boy

saying he had burned the midnight oil to compose it. Well, there you are. What does she do? Insted of accepting my statement, being the first, she argues in a most élaborate way that I couldn't possibly have coppied from Browne, and Browne couldn't possibly have copied from me. But it would have been to much of a coincidence if we'd both written exsactly the same sonnit out of our own heads, so what does she conklude?"

I said I didn't know.

"Why, fathead, that we both coppied it from somebody else — out of some book by some well-known proper dead poet. I've no doubt now, on thinking over it, that Browne *did* do that; because when I first read his poem I could hardly believe that he had written such real poetry, owing to the rimes and smoothness. But it's all over now. She's written a letter I can't show you. To hope even for her friendship wouldn't be any good. A girl hates a joke something frightful."

"How about Browne?" I said.

"She's written to him also, asking him



## Browne, Bradwell, and Me

where he got the verses out of, and explaining she doesn't believe they are original, and saying how another acquaintance of hers had sent the very same lot the day before. So now you see what a sinful mess you've made of it."

I said I did, but I felt it was my duty to him.

"Yes, I know," he said; "but the question is, What do I do now? You see 'all's fair' and all that; but now, being out of the hunt, ought I to throw up the sponge and tell the truth, or ought I not?"

"I don't know, Bradwell," I said; "but anyway you won't mention me, I hope, because I only acted for you, and did a jolly dangerous thing."

"No, you're safe enough, and, in fact, I'm going to reward you for what you *did* do," said Bradwell. "But seeing I'm out of it, I think it will be a manly act to Browne if I tell Mabel frankly that I resorted to strateji."

"But me?" I said.

"I shall merely inform her," answered Bradwell, "that one of my emissaries found the poem, and, of course, brought it

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to me ; that I despatched it—as a joke, taking care not to say I was the author. I shall end with these words: ‘Browne is innocent.’”

All of which he did, and I left the letter in the usual spot. But Mabel cut him altogether from that day ; and he told me girls have no humor and laughed it off, though he felt it a lot, and often smacked my head out of bitterness of mind afterwards, but not hard. He gave me an old knife for a reward, but told me at the same time never to do anything for him again without being commanded.

As for Mabel, she threw over Browne just like she threw over Bradwell, in spite of Bradwell’s letter ; and Bradwell said it was a nemmecis, whatever that is ; and I had a nemmecis to, because a week afterwards Bradwell threw over me and made young West his fag. I felt hurt, but, of course, that didn’t get known to Bradwell ; and if I fag again, I won’t so much as make a peep of taste unless I’m commanded to.

## Gideon's Front Tooth

**I** BELIEVE Gideon was the only Jew that ever came to Dunston's, and I expect, taking it all round, he might have had a better time at a school for Jews in general; though in one way he wouldn't have done as well, and wouldn't have had the adventure with old Grimbald, which turned out so splendidly for him when old Grimbald died.

Though easily the richest chap at Merivale, and getting no less than ten shillings a week pocket-money, Gideon was so awfully fond of coin that he hardly spent a penny, and the only thing he did with his money was to lend it to fellows. He didn't lend it for nothing, having a curious system by which you paid in marbles, or bats, or knives for the money, and, in spite of that, still had to pay back the money itself after a certain time. You signed a paper, and

## The Human Boy

Gideon said that if chaps hadn't paid back the tin on the dates named it would be very serious for them. But it got serious for him after a bit, because Steggles, who knew quite as much about money as Gideon (though he never had any), borrowed a whole pound once, and promised to pay five shillings for it for one term; and Gideon was new to Steggles then, and agreed. But when the time of payment came, Steggles said that Gideon had better regard it as a bad debt, because he wasn't going to pay back even the original pound. Then Gideon thought a bit, and asked him why, and Steggles told him. He said: "Because you know jolly well the Doctor doesn't allow chaps to lend money."

And Gideon said:

"This is the first time I've heard that."

"Anyway, it's usury, which is a crime," said Steggles, "and I'm not going to pay anything; and, being less than twenty-one, you can't make me; so it amounts to a bad debt, as I told you just now. You've done jolly well, one way and another, and you've got two bats, and Lord knows how

## Gideon's Front Tooth

many india-rubber-balls, and cricket-balls, and silver pencils, and knives out of it, including Ashby minor's watch-chain, which is silver; and if you take my tip you'll keep quiet, because once all these kids get to know anybody under twenty-one can borrow money without returning it, then it's all up with your beastly financial schemes."

Gideon was remarkably surprised to know what a lot Steggles had found out about him, and accused him of looking into his play-chest; and Steggles said he had. Then Gideon went; and about three chaps who had heard the talk told others, and they told still more chaps, until, finally, a good many fellows who owed Gideon money felt there was no hurry about paying it back till it happened to be convenient. In fact, Gideon jolly soon saw he couldn't do any more good for himself like that, and at the beginning of the next term, when chaps were pretty flush of coin, he wrote up in the gym, "There will be a sale of bats, knives, and other various useful articles, between two and three o'clock, by auction, on Tuesday.—J. GIDEON."

## The Human Boy

Somebody tore it down, but not before most fellows had read it ; and when Gideon and young Miller, who had a bat in the auction, and hoped to get it back if possible, were seen carrying Gideon's play-chest to the gym after dinner on the appointed day, of course we went. It passed off very well for Gideon, because the things were really good, and often almost new. He seemed to know all about auctions, and hit the chest with a stump, and explained the things, and what good points they had about them. He only took money down, and I will say nobody could have done it fairer. If a knife had a broken blade, for instance, or a bat was slightly sprung, which happened with one, he always pointed it out, so that nobody could say he had been choused over it. Young Miller got back his bat for four shillings and eightpence ; and Ashby minor got back his silver chain for thirteen shillings ; but it wasn't much good to him, because, in order to raise the thirteen bob, he had to raffle the chain at once, at shilling shares ; and he took one, hoping to be lucky, but he wasn't, Fowle unfortunately getting

## Gideon's Front Tooth

it. Gideon told me afterwards that the sale came out fairly, but not quite what he had hoped. He rather sneered at the Dunston chaps in general, and said they were a poverty-stricken crew ; which got me into a bate, and I told him that I'd sooner be the son of an officer in the Royal Navy, which I am, than the biggest Jew diamond dealer in the world, his father being in that profession. He said there was no accounting for tastes, but he should have thought that a man who could deliberately go and be a sailor must be weak in the head. Then I punched him, and he instantly went down and apologized. I may mention that I am Bray, the cock of the Lower School.

Before coming to Gideon's front tooth, just to let you know exactly the chap he was, I'll mention another thing he did. An old woman was allowed to bring up fruit and tuck generally, and sell it to us after morning school. Steggles, who knows the reason for pretty nearly everything, said this was permitted by Doctor Dunston to take the edge off our appetites ; but anyway, the old woman sold strawberries and

## The Human Boy

raspberries in summer-time, and these were arranged with cabbage-leaves in little wicker baskets at about fourpence each. Well, one day Gideon, who never refused to eat fruit if offered it, but very seldom bought any, asked the old woman what she gave for the wicker baskets, and she said threepence a dozen. Then he asked her what she would give for those which had been used once, and she thought, and said they would be worth at least three halfpence a dozen to her. He didn't say any more, but after that it was a rum thing how all the used baskets, which generally were seen kicking about the playground in shoals, disappeared. Nobody noticed it at the time, but afterwards we remembered clearly that they *had* disappeared. And just at the end of the term a chap, hurrying in late after the bell rang, came bang on Gideon and the old woman round a corner out of sight of the gates. And the chap saw Gideon give her a pile of baskets and get three halfpence. Of course, it was the last three halfpence he ever got that way, because when it became known the chaps rendered



## Gideon's Front Tooth

their baskets useless for commerce in many ways. And Barlow called Gideon "Shylock minor" when he heard that he'd made two shillings and fivepence halfpenny; which name stuck to Gideon forever. And Steggles got nine other chaps to subscribe a penny each and buy a pound of flesh from a butcher's shop, because in Shakespeare Shylock was death on his pound of flesh. The pound was put under Gideon's pillow by Steggles himself, and when Gideon shoved his watch under his pillow, which he always did at night, he found it; and Steggles says he turned pale, but read what was pinned on the pound of flesh, and then smiled and wrapped the meat up in a letter from home, and said: "What fools you chaps are, wasting money like that! But it looks all right, and will mean a good feed for nothing."

Next day he got up very early and took his pound of flesh down to the kitchen and got them to cook it; and he ate about half before breakfast and had the rest cold in his desk during Monsieur Michel's lesson, which was a safe time. And Steggles said we

## The Human Boy

ought to have gone one better and put poison on it.

The great affair of the tooth came on at the beginning of next term ; and first I must tell you that next door to Dunston's lived an old man, so frightfully ancient that his skin was all shrivelled over his bones. He didn't like boys much, but he would look over his garden-wall sometimes into our playground and scowl if anybody caught his eye. Various things, of course, went over the wall often, and it was one of the excitements of Dunston's to go into old Grimbald's garden and get them back. Twice only he caught a chap, and both times, despite his awful age and yellowness of skin, he thrashed the chap very fairly hard with a walking-stick ; but he never reported anybody to Dunston, and it was generally thought he regarded it as a sort of sport hunting for chaps in his garden. Of course, in fair, open hunting he hadn't a chance, and the two he did catch he got by stealth, hiding behind bushes on a rather dark evening.

Well, the facts would never have been known about this tooth but for Gideon's

## Gideon's Front Tooth

mean spirit. It happened to be necessary for him to fight me, and though not caring much about it, he couldn't help himself. Besides, though the champion of the Lower School, I was tons smaller than Gideon, and Gideon didn't know till after the fight that I was a champion, the true facts about my greatness being hid from him.

Just before the fight Gideon said: "Oh! my tooth, by the way. It may be hurt, and it cost my father five guineas." So, to our great interest he unscrewed one of his two top front teeth and gave it to his second. You couldn't have told it was a sham, so remarkably was it done, and it screwed on to the foundation of the original tooth much like a spike screws into the sole of a cricket-boot. Gideon had fallen down-stairs when he was ten and knocked off half the tooth. so he told us; but Murray, who is well up in science, said that all Jews' front teeth are rather rocky, because in feudal times they were pulled out with pincers as a form of torture, and to make the Jews give up their secret treasures. Murray said that after many generations of pulling out Nat-

## The Human Boy

ure got sick of it, and that in modern times the front teeth of Jews aren't worth talking about. Murray is full of rum ideas like that, and he hopes to go in for engineering, having already many secret inventions waiting to be patented.

As to Gideon, I licked him rather badly in two rounds and a half. Then he was mopped up and dressed, and screwed in his front tooth again with the greatest ease.

Once it got known about this tooth, and fellows were naturally excited. Steggles said it was on the principle of a tobacco-pipe mouthpiece; and, finding the chaps were keen to see it, Gideon let it be generally known he would freely show it to anybody for threepence a time, and to friends for twopence. But this was a safe reduction to make, because, properly speaking, he hadn't any friends. Seeing there were nearly 200 boys at Dunston's, and that certainly half, including several fellows from the Sixth, took a pleasure in seeing the tooth, and didn't mind the rather high charge, Gideon did jolly well; and in the

## Gideon's Front Tooth

case of Nubby Tomkins, he made actually one shilling and threepence; because the tooth had a most peculiar fascination for Nubby, and he saw it no less than five times. After that Gideon made a reduction to him, as well he might. But somehow Slade, the head of the school, was very averse to Gideon's front tooth when he heard about it, and he decided that there must be no more exhibitions of it for money. He told Gideon so himself.

However, a new boy came a week afterwards and heard about the strangeness of the tooth, and offered a shilling, in three instalments, to see it; which was too much temptation for Gideon, and he showed it, contrary to what Slade had said.

Slade, of course, heard, for the new boy happened to be his own cousin, though called Saunders; and then there was a curious scene in the playground, which I fortunately saw. Slade came up to Gideon in the very quiet way he has, and asked him in a perfectly gentlemanly voice for his front tooth. At first Gideon seemed inclined not to give it up, but he saw what an awfully

## The Human Boy

serious thing that would be, and finally unscrewed it, though not willingly.

“Now,” said Slade, “I’ll have no more of this penny peep-show business at Merivale. I told you once, and you have disobeyed me. So there’s an end of your beastly tooth. What’s this?”

He took something out of his pocket.

“It’s a catapult,” said Gideon.

“It is,” said Slade, “and I’m going to use your tooth instead of a bullet, and fire it into space.”

“It cost five guineas,” said Gideon.

“Don’t care if it cost a hundred,” answered Slade, still in a very gentlemanly sort of way. “We can’t have this sort of thing here, you know.”

Slade was just going to fire into space, as he had said, when a robin suddenly settled within thirty yards of us, on the wall between the playground and old Grimbal’s. Slade being a wonderful shot with a catapult (having once shot a wood-pigeon), suddenly fired at the robin, and only missed it by about four inches. He said the shape of a front tooth was very unfavorable for shoot-

## Gideon's Front Tooth

ing. But, anyway, the tooth went over into Grimbal's, and we distinctly heard it hit against the side of his house.

Then Slade went away, and we rotted Gideon rather, because not having the tooth looked rum, and made a difference in his voice. He took it very quietly, and said he rather thought his father would be able to summon Slade ; and before evening school, having marked down the spot where he fancied his tooth had hit Grimbal's house, he went to look with a box of matches. What happened afterwards he told us frankly ; and it was certainly true, because, with all his faults, Gideon never lied to anybody.

"I went quietly over, and began carefully looking along the bottom of the wall, using a match to every foot or so," he said, "and I had done about half when I heard a door open. I then hooked it, and ran almost on to old Grimbal. He had not opened the door at all, but was coming up the garden path at the critical moment. Of course, he caught me. He was going to rub it into me with his stick, when I said I should think

## The Human Boy

it very kind if he would hear me first, as I had a perfectly good excuse for being there.

“He said :

“ ‘What excuse can you have for trespassing in my garden, you little oily wretch ?’

“ ‘ ‘Oily wretch’ was what he called me ; and I said that my tooth had been fired into his garden that very day, about half-past one, by a chap with a catapult ; and I lighted a match and showed him it was missing.

“ He said :

“ ‘How the deuce are you going to find a tooth in a garden this size ?’ And I told him I had marked it down very carefully, and that it had cost five guineas, and that I rather believed my father would be able to summon the chap who had shot it away. He seemed a good deal interested, and said he thought very likely he might, if it was robbery with violence. Then he asked me if I was the boy he had seen beating down the price of a purse at Wilkinson’s in Merivale, and I said I was. Then he said, ‘Come in and have a bit of cake, boy’ ; and I went in and had a bit of cake, and saw on a shelf in his room about fifty or sixty



## Gideon's Front Tooth

cricket-balls, and various things which he has collared when they went over. He asked me a lot of questions about different things, and I answered them. All he said was about money. He also asked me to be good enough to value the things he had, which came over the wall from time to time; and I did, and he thanked me. They were worth fifteen shillings and tenpence; and Wright's ball, which everybody thought was stolen by the milkman, wasn't, for old Grimal's got it; and the milkman should be told and apologized to.

"Well, he knew a lot about money, and told me he had thousands of golden sovereigns, which he makes breed into thousands more.

"He said :

" ' You're the only boy I ever met with a grain of sense in his head. Now, if I gave you a check on my bankers in Merivale for five pounds to-day, and wrote to you to-morrow morning to say I had changed my mind, what would you do ?'

"I said, ' It would be too late, sir, because your check would have been sent off to my

## The Human Boy

father that very night, to put out at interest for me.' He said, 'That's right. Never give back money, or anything.' Then he asked me my name, and told me I might come back to-morrow and look for my tooth by daylight."

That was Gideon's most peculiar adventure, and, though he never found the tooth or saw old Grimbald again, yet about seven or eight months afterwards, when old Grimbald was discovered all curiously twisted up and dead in bed by the man who took him his breakfast, the result of Gideon's visit to him came out. Old Grimbald had specially put him into his will by some legal method, and Doctor Dunston had Gideon into his study three days after old Grimbald kicked. It then was proved that old Grimbald had left Gideon all the things that came over the wall, and also a legacy of fifty pounds in money, because, according to the bit of the will which the Doctor read to Gideon out of a lawyer's letter, he was the only boy old Grimbald had ever met with who showed any intelligence above that of the anthropoid ape.

Gideon returned all the balls and things

## Gideon's Front Tooth

to their owners free of charge, but not until the rightful owners proved they were so. And the money he sent to his father; and his father, he told me afterwards, was so jolly pleased about the whole affair that he added nine hundred and fifty pounds to old Grimal's fifty. Therefore, by shooting Gideon's front tooth at a robin, Slade was actually putting the enormous sum of one thousand pounds into Gideon's pocket, which I should think was about the rummest thing that ever happened in the world.

Gideon stopped at Dunston's one term after that. Then he went away, and, I believe, began to help his father to sell diamonds. He was fairly good at French, and very at German; but of other things he knew rather little, except arithmetic, and his was the most beautiful arithmetic which had ever been done at Merivale; for I heard Stokes, who was a seventeenth wrangler in his time, tell the Doctor so.

## The Chemistry Class

**T**HIS story about Guy Fawkes's Night at Dunston's is worth knowing, because it shows the rumminess of Nubby Tomkins. Tomkins, I may say, was called "Nubby," owing to his nose, which was extremely huge, though he said it was Roman, and swore he wouldn't change it if he could. Anyway, Bradwell made a rhyme about it that is certainly good enough to repeat. He wrote it first on a black-board with chalk, and a good many chaps learned it by heart.

It ran like this :

"Our Nubby's nose is ponderous,  
And our Nubby's nose is long ;  
So it wouldn't disgrace  
Our Nubby's face  
If half his nose was gone."

## The Chemistry Class

Which was not only jolly good poetry, but also true—a thing all poetry isn't by long chalks, as you can see in Virgil and such like.

Well, Nubbs sang the solos in chapel on Sundays, and people came from far to hear him do it; in consequence of which, so Steggles said, the Doctor favored him, and regarded him as an advertisement to Dunston's. But his singing wasn't in it compared with the advertisement he gave the Doctor on Guy Fawkes's Night the term before Slade left.

To explain the whole tremendous thing I must tell you that Nubbs belonged to the chemistry class. This class, in fact, was pretty well started for him, his father telling Dunston, so Nubbs said, that he shouldn't send him at all if he couldn't be taught chemistry; because Nubbs had shown a good deal of keenness for chemicals generally from the earliest days, and bought little boxes of "serpents' eggs" and red fire instead of sweets ever since he was old enough to buy anything. He had also blown off his eyebrows and eyelashes with a mixture he

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was grinding up in a mortar, and they had never grown again to this day—all of which things showed he had chemistry in him to a great extent. So the Doctor started a chemistry class, and a chap called Stoddart, from Merivale, came up once a week to take it; and Nubbs joined, and so did I, not because I had chemistry in me worth speaking of, but because I was a chum of Nubby's. Wilson also joined, and so did Hodges. I may mention my name is Mathers.

I always thought that chemists simply mix the muck doctors give you when you're queer, but it seems not. In fact, there are several sorts of chemists, and Nubbs said he hoped to belong to the best sort, who don't have bottles of red and green stuff in the windows, and so on. He said a man who sold pills and tooth-brushes, and liquorice-root and soap, could not be considered a classy chemist. The real flyers made discoveries and froze air, and sneaked one another's inventions, and got knighted by the Queen if they had luck and if they were well thought of by the newspapers. I should think really Nubbs might come to being

## The Chemistry Class

knighted if he sticks to it, for even down to the stuff in cough lozenges nothing is hid from him.

Once the matron gave me simply a vile lozenge for my throat, which got a bit foggy owing to falling into the water during "hare and hounds." Well, the lozenge was white in color, but even a white lozenge may be very decent sometimes, so I took a shot at it going to bed. But it was so jolly frightful to the taste that I chucked it away, and next morning found it again and examined it after drying. On it I then found the words "Chlorate of potash." So I took it to Nubbs. He said it was certainly a chemical, and added that the stuff in it was almost the same as you make "Pharaoh's serpents" with. I could hardly believe such a thing, so he lighted the lozenge and it burned blue, and a long, wriggling, brownish ash came curling out of it like a snake, just as Nubby said, which is well worth knowing to anybody who ever has a chlorate of potash lozenge. Many such like remarkable and useful things Nubby could tell you; among others, how

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to mix sulphur and gunpowder and other ingredients for fireworks. He had, in fact, an awful fine book devoted to the subject, and wooden affairs to load cases ; and once when Stoddart didn't turn up and the Doctor put us on our honor to do the proper things in the laboratory alone, Nubbs finished off analyzing some mess in about five minutes, and spent the complete rest of the time making a rocket. It had four blue stars and thirteen yellow ones, and the case was made out of a stiff brown paper roll in which his mother had that morning sent Nubbs a photograph of her new baby at home. And Nubbs forgot the photograph and stuffed the mixture in upon it, and made a separate compartment for the stars on top. So the photograph of Nubby's mother's new baby, curiously enough, went off with the rocket, and was never more seen by mortal eye. Not that Nubbs cared. He kept the rocket till the Doctor's birthday, and after prayers, when he knew he was in his study, with the windows open and the blinds up, being summer-time, Nubbs let it off in the front garden, and we helped. It turned out



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very good in a way, though not quite a perfect rocket, because instead of going up it tore along the ground. But it tore for an enormous distance, and then turned and came back all of itself. And the blue stars did not go off, but the yellow ones did—or some—in a bed of rather swagger geraniums, unfortunately.

The Doctor didn't care much about it, not understanding our motives. But Nubbs explained that he had done it out of honor to the day. Then the Doctor thanked him, and said he had doubtless meant well, and that from the earliest times of the Chinese the pyrotechnist's art had been employed upon occasions of legitimate festivity and rejoicing.

I mention this because it was the encouragement he had over this creeping rocket that made Nubbs get so above himself, if you understand me. He never forgot it, and next autumn term he actually asked the Doctor if he might have a regular firework display in the playground on the night of the Fifth of November. He asked rather cunningly, just after an English History

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lesson, during which the Doctor had been slating Guy Fawkes frightfully ; and having said such a heap of hard things about the beggar, Doctor Dunston couldn't very well refuse.

He said :

“ Your request is unusual Tomkins ; but I can see no objection at the moment. However, I will let you have my answer at no distant date.”

And I said to Nubbs :

“ That means he'll think and think till he's got a reason why you shouldn't, and let you know then.”

But Nubbs said to me :

“ I believe he'll let me do it, feeling so jolly bitter as he does about Guy Fawkes.”

And blessed if he didn't ! Nubbs undertook to make the things himself. Nothing was to be bought but chemicals in a raw, unmixed condition, and Doctor Dunston actually headed the subscription list with 2s. 6d. ; and Thompson gave the same, and Mannering 2s., and “ Frenchy ” 3s. Fifty-two chaps also contributed various sums from 1s. to 1d. ; and Nubbs became rather

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important, and went down gradually to the bottom of the Lower Fifth owing to the strain upon his mind.

He gathered together £2 7s. 5*d.* in all, and made it up to £2 10s. himself; and Fowle's father, who was in some business where they used sulphur in terrific quantities, got four pounds weight of it for nothing, and Nubbs said it was a godsend for illuminating purposes. He had been to the Crystal Palace, and told us he was going to carry everything out just like they did there, as far as he could with the money. At the last moment he got a tremendous increase of funds in the shape of a pound from his father; and, strangely enough, it was that extra pound that wrecked him. Without that father's pound he couldn't have arranged the principal feature of the whole performance; and without that principal feature nothing in the way of misfortunes to Nubbs worth mentioning would have fallen out. But the pound came, and with it a letter very encouraging to Nubby.

He went on mixing away at the various proper compounds and experimenting with

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them till he got his rockets to go up like larks and his Roman candles to shoot out stars the length of a cricket pitch. Then his governor's pound came, and he decided on having a set piece with it. A set piece, Nubby said, is the triumph of the firework maker's art—and very likely it is in proper hands. You can have likenesses in fire, or words, or ships, or "Fame crowning Virtue," or, in fact, pretty well anything. A set piece is designed small first, then large; and it is worked out with little tiny things like squibs, only very small and without any bang at the end. These are all lighted off at once, and they burn one color first, then change to another. Nubbs said his would start yellow, because it was cheaper, and finally turn green. The thing was what design to have, and the four chaps in the chemistry class all thought differently. I advised trying a shot at a huge portrait of the Doctor, but when it came to particulars nobody knew how to work a portrait; and Hodges thought we might do something about Guy Fawkes, but Nubbs didn't care about that. Then Hodges thought again,

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and suggested the words, "God bless the Doctor," and I agreed that it would be fine ; but Wilson said it was profane, and might annoy the Doctor frightfully, especially when it turned green. Then Nubbs suggested the words, "Doctor Dunston is a Brick !" and Hodges said that it was good, and Wilson said it might be good, but it wasn't true, anyway. However, it was three to one, though we all admitted that, from his point of view, Wilson was right to hate the Doctor, because the Doctor hates him.

The thing was to make a licking big frame of light wood, and arrange the letters across it, and the note of exclamation at the end. This we did, and hammered it against the playground wall, and wheeled up the screens that go behind the bowler's arm in the cricket season, and hid away the set piece behind them till the time came. Likewise we arranged stakes for the Roman candles, and a board for the Catharine wheels, and a string for the flying pigeons, and so on. And also we rigged up bits of tin round the playground and by the fir-trees at the top end and behind the gym.

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These were for Bengal lights and other illuminations. All of this Nubbs had arranged for the paltry sum of £3 10s. The chemistry class had a half-holiday as the time drew on, and we worked like niggers, all four of us. Nubbs commanded, so to speak, and mixed and did the grinding and pounding and stars. Hodges and I hammered up the heavy posts and stakes in the playground, and carried out odd jobs generally; and Wilson manufactured cases for everything with brown paper and paste and string.

The set piece took two hundred and thirteen little tubes. These Wilson made in lengths of a yard and cut off at the required size. And Nubbs stuffed them—with green fire first and yellow on top. It promised to be a jolly big thing altogether, and four days before the night Nubbs began to get awfully nervous, and to prepare yards and yards of touch-paper.

And Corkey minimus heard the Doctor say to Browne :

“ Really the lads have devoted no little energy and method on their proceedings ;

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and it appears—so Mr. Stoddart tells me—that the boy Tomkins has mixed his compounds quite correctly, thereby insuring that brilliance and variety which is looked for in an exhibition of this kind. I wonder whether we might ask the parents and friends of those who dwell at Merivale and the immediate neighborhood.”

And Browne, who never misses a chance of showing the brute he is at heart, said :

“Really, I should think twice, Doctor Dunston. There is such an element of chance with amateur fireworks. Unfortunately, we can’t have a dress rehearsal, as with the scenes from Shakespeare and the recitations at the end of the term.”

“Nevertheless,” said the Doctor, “I am disposed to run the risk. A little harmless pleasure combined with courtesy to relatives at mid-term is rather desirable than not.”

So about fifty people were asked, and they brought fifty more, and the cads from Merivale got to know too, and there was a good crowd of them along the fence by the gym. Also two policemen came, and Nubbs, who was nervous before, grew much

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worse when he heard of it. Besides, we had a frightful shock two days before the firework night, owing to the loss of poor old Wilson. By simply sickening luck he got reported by Browne for cheek. It was when Browne came out in a new pair of awfully squeaking boots with sham pearl buttons at the side and drab tops; and Wilson said they were ugly "eighteens" and Browne heard him. The Doctor took an awfully grave view of this, and told Wilson that personality was the vilest kind of cheek. Which wouldn't have mattered, but he gave him a thousand lines as well, and forbade him to see the fireworks or help any more with them.

"And that's the man you call a brick!" Wilson said, rather bitterly. It certainly was rough, after the way he had worked; but from the Wing Dormitory, where he would be at the time, he might be able to see pretty well everything by leaning far out between the window bars. Which Nubbs pointed out to him, and he said he should. He also said he'd pay out Browne some day, and very likely Dunston too.



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Well, the night came, and it was a fine one; and the cads likewise came and lined the fence. Then the Doctor clapped his hands twice, which was the signal to begin; and just as he did so out burst yellow fire everywhere behind the bits of tin, lighted simultaneously by seven chaps. And everybody seemed to like it; and the Doctor said:

“Capital! Bravo, Tomkins—a pleasing and fairy like conceit!”

Then Nubbs let fly two rockets, and they went up well and burst out in stars, though not as many by any means as we had crammed into them; but one twisted for some reason, and, instead of falling in the direction of the cads, the stick twinkled down, with just a spark of red here and there in the line of it, bang behind the chapel. Both Nubbs and I distinctly heard it go smack through the top of the greenhouse, and I rather think the Doctor heard it too, for he didn’t say “Bravo” or anything, but just sent a kid to tell Nubbs to point future rockets the other way, which disheartened Nubbs, because he’s like a girl

## The Human Boy

at times of great excitement such as this was. But he soon cheered up, especially at the splendid success of the Catherine-wheels, which he hadn't hoped much from, and at the cheers even the cads gave for the "golden rain" which showed up everything as bright as day, including Maude and the other Dunston girls, and Mrs. Dunston, and Nubby's father standing smiling very amiably by the Doctor, and the policemen blinking, and the crowd, and a white dab hanging out of a high window afar off, which I saw and knew to be Wilson.

Only the balloon failed, owing to the nervousness of Nubbs, who set fire to the whole show while he was trying to light the spirit on the sponge underneath; but he passed it off with crackers thrown among the kids, and then, while they were all yelling, he dragged away the cricket screens, and Nubbs let off the set piece. He lighted the touch-paper, and it snapped and crackled all over the design in a moment, and a thick smoke rose, and out of it came the set piece flaring in rich yellow fire. Of course, we expected what Nubbs and Wilson had ar-

## The Chemistry Class

ranged, viz., "Doctor Dunston is a Brick!" but instead there came out these awful words :

"DOCTOR DUNSTON  
IS A BRUTE!"

That just shows what a frightful difference three letters will make in a thing ; and the night was so dark and the letters so big that you could have read them a mile off. Only, if you will believe it, Dunston didn't. People applauded like anything at first, till the preliminary smoke cleared off and they read the truth. Then they shut up and made a sound like wind coming through a wood. But the cads yelled and roared, and so did the policemen, for I heard them ; and to make the frightful thing a shade more frightful, if possible, the Doctor, who is as blind as ten bats, and didn't realize the end of the set piece, but only read his name at the top, clapped his hands and said :

"Famous, famous ! You excel yourself, Tomkins !"

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Then the words began gradually to turn green ; and, for that matter, so did Nubbs. In fact, whether it was the reflected light or the condition of his mind, or both, I certainly never saw any chap become so perfectly horrid to look at as Nubbs did then. His nose seemed to stand out like a great green rock, and his eyes bulged, and his chin dropped, and the set piece turned his teeth as bright as precious emeralds. He just merely said, " Good Lord !" — nothing more—then hooked it off into the darkness, simply shattered.

At the same time Stoddart and Thompson, and Mannering and Browne, and some chaps from the Sixth, not knowing what color the beastly set piece might turn next, or how soon the Doctor would spot it, dashed at the thing and dragged it down, and trampled on it ; and Browne in the act burned the very boots that Wilson had cheeked, which pleased Wilson a good deal when he heard it.

After that it was all over, and the Doctor, thinking the set piece had died a natural death, so to speak, saw me under the gas-

## The Chemistry Class

light at the gate, as everybody streamed out, and said :

“ Ah, young man, what was that last word in the illumination ? I know you and Hodges also had a hand in it, as well as Tomkins.”

And I said :

“ Please, sir, we arranged the words ‘ Doctor Dunston is a Brick ! ’ ”

And he said :

“ Excellent ! Pithy and concise if a little familiar. I only hope you all echo that sentiment—every one of you. Send Tomkins to me, and tell the other fellows there is cake and lemonade going in the dining-hall.”

Just as if the other fellows didn’t know it ! But everybody gave three cheers for the Doctor and Mrs. Dunston, and I started to find Nubbs ; and the policemen made the cads go, though they went reluctantly.

I looked long for Nubby, and at last found him all alone in the gym. One bit of candle was burning, which looked frightfully poor after all the brilliance of the fireworks, and Nubbs had got the parallel bars

## The Human Boy

under the flying rings, and was standing on them—I mean the bars.

“What the Dickens are you doing, Nubby?” I said.

And he answered :

“It’s no jolly good attempting to stop me now, because it’s too late. My life is ruined, and my father was there too to see it ruined ; and I’m going to hang myself, as every convenience for hanging is here.”

Mind you, he would have done it. Knowing Tomkins as I do, and his great ingeniousness, I don’t mind swearing that he would have been a hung chap in another minute. So I told him ; but, though doubtful, he decided to put it off, anyway. I even got him to promise he wouldn’t hang himself at all if his father believed his innocence about the set piece. And Crewe, the headmaster under the Doctor, and old Briggs and Thompson got us in a corner—Nubbs and Hodges and me—and we solemnly vowed we knew nothing of it ; and Crewe went down to the *Merivale Trumpet* and made the reporter put in the original words when it came out ; and Thompson explained to Mrs.

## The Chemistry Class

Dunston how some evil-disposed, wicked person had tampered with the set piece, and begged her not to wound the feelings of the Doctor by telling him ; and the Sixth hushed it up among the kids ; and I sneaked a bit of cake for Wilson, and went up after the row was over and told him everything, down to the burning of Browne's boots.

He confessed to me then that he had done it, which didn't surprise me much, knowing how he had worked, and then at the last minute almost been deprived of seeing the show. It was certainly a terrible revenge ; but, of course, a terrible revenge which doesn't come off owing to a master being too shortsighted to see it is pretty sickening for the revenger. Besides the risk.

Mr. Crewe worked like a demon to find out who had done it, and he suspected Wilson from the first, but couldn't prove it. But at last he did find out through Fowle, who got it out of Ferrars, who got it out of West, who got it out of Nubbs in a moment of rage. For I may say Wilson himself told Nubbs, and Nubbs never for-

## The Human Boy

gave him, and says he never shall, even if they ever both go to heaven.

So Crewe, having found out, had some talk with Wilson. But he didn't lick him; whereas Wilson did lick Fowle, and that pretty badly. Not that Fowle cares for an ordinary licking more than another chap cares for a smack on the head. The only way to hurt him is to twist his arm round, about twice, and then hit him hard just above the elbow. I may say I found this out myself, and everybody does it now.



## Doctor Dunston's Howler

**M**IND you, if it's interesting to watch any ordinary person come a howler, what must it be to see your own head-master do it? A "howler," of course, is the same as a "cropper," and you can come one at cricket or football or in class or in every-day life.

Dr. Dunston's howler was a most complicated sort, and I had the luck to be one of the chaps who witnessed him come it. Of course, to see any master make a tremendous mistake is good; but when you are dealing with a man almost totally bald and sixty-two years of age the affair has a solemn side, especially owing to his being a Rev. and a D.D. In fact, Slade, who was with me, said the spectacle reminded him of the depths of woe beggars got into in Greek tragedies, which often wanted half a dozen gods to lug them

## The Human Boy

out of. But no gods troubled themselves about Dunston; and it really was a bit awful looked at from his point of view; because it's beastly to give yourself away to kids at the best of times; and no doubt to him all of us are more or less as kids, even the Sixth.

He often had a way of bringing the parents of a possible new boy through one or two of the big class-rooms and the chapel of Merivale, just to show what a swagger place it was. Then we all bucked up like mad, and the masters bucked up too, and gave their gowns a hitch round and their mortar-boards a cock up, and made more noise and put on more side generally, just to add to the splendor of the scene from the point of view of the parents of the possible new boy.

Sometimes the affair was rather spoiled by an aunt or mother or some woman or other asking the Doctor homely sort of questions about sanitary arrangements or prayers; then to see old Dunston making long-winded replies and getting even the drains to sound majestic was fine. His manner varied according to the people who came over the school. Sometimes, if it only hap-

## Doctor Dunston's Howler

pened to be a guardian or a lawyer, he was short and stern. Then he just swept along, calling attention to the ventilation and discipline, and looking at the chaps as if they were dried specimens in a museum ; but with fathers or women he had a playful mood and an expression known as the "parent-smile." To mothers he never talked about "pupils," but called the whole shoot of us "his lads," and beamed and fluttered his gown, like a hen with chickens flutters its wings. The masters always copied him, and to see that little brute Browne trying to flutter over the kids like a hen when the Doctor came into his class-room was a ghastly sight, knowing him as we did. Also the Doctor would often pat a youngster on the head and beam at him. He generally singled Corkey minimus out for patting and beaming ; and Corkey minor said the irony of it was pretty frightful, considering that Corkey minimus, for different reasons, got licked oftener by the Doctor than almost any chap in the Lower School.

Well, one day in came the Doctor to the school-room of the Fourth. I'm in the Sixth

## The Human Boy

myself, and a personal chum of Slade's, the head of the school ; but I happened to have gone to the Fourth with a message, so I saw what happened. A very big man who puffed out his chest like a pigeon followed the Doctor. He had a blue tie on with a jolly bright diamond in it, and there were small purple veins in a regular network over his cheeks, and his mustache was yellowish-gray and waxed out as sharp as pins. A lady followed him with red rims to her little eyes and gold things hanging about her chest. The Doctor, being all arched up and rolled round from the small of the back like a wood-louse, seemed to show they were parents of perhaps more fellows than one. The big chap wore an eye-glass and spoke very loud, and was jolly pleasant.

“ Ah ! ” he said, “ and this is where the little boys work, eh ? I expect, now, my youngster will be drafted in among these small men, Doctor Dunston ? ”

“ It is very possible—nay, probable in the highest degree, my lord,” said the Doctor. “ We are now,” he continued, “ in the presence of the Fourth and Lower Fourth. The

## Doctor Dunston's Howler

class-room is spacious, as you see, and new. A commanding panorama of the surrounding country and our playing-fields may be enjoyed from the French windows. If two of you lads will move that black-board from there, Lord Golightly may be able to see something of the prospect."

Two of the kids promptly knocked down the black-board nearly on to the purple-veined lord's head. Then suddenly the lady called out and attracted his attention. Looking round, we found she had got awfully excited, and stood pointing straight at young Tomlin. He was a mere kid, at the extreme bottom of the Lower Fourth; but he happened to be my fag, so I was interested. She pointed at him, in the most frantic way, with a hand in a brownish-yellow glove, and a gold bracelet outside the glove and a little watch let into the bracelet.

"Good gracious!" she said, "do look Ralph! What an astounding resemblance! Whoever is that boy?"

Tomlin turned rather red in the gills, which was natural.

"Do you know the lad?" asked the Doctor.

## The Human Boy

“Never saw him before in my life ; but I hope he’ll forgive me for being so rude as to point at him in that way,” she said. “He’s exactly like our dear Carlo ; they might be twins.”

Tomlin thought she meant a pet dog, and got rather rum to look at.

“Carlo is our son, you know,” explained the lord.

“Singular coincidence,” answered Doctor Dunston, not looking very keen about it. In fact, he wasn’t too fond of Tomlin at any time, and seemed sorry he should be dragged in now. But the kid was a very tidy sort, really — Captain of the Third Footer Eleven and a good runner. He happened to be the son of a big London hatter who had a shop of enormous dimensions in Bond Street ; and the Doctor was said to get his own hats there ; yet he didn’t like Tomlin.

Tomlin went out into the open, and the purple-veined lord shook hands with him, and the lord’s wife stood him in the light and turned him round to catch different expressions. Then they admitted that the

## Doctor Dunston's Howler

likeness was really most wonderful, and they both hoped Tomlin and Carlo would be great friends. Tomlin, told by the Doctor to answer, stood on one leg, twisted his arms in a curious way he's got when nervous, and said he hoped they might be; but he said it as though he knew jolly well they wouldn't.

Then the lord and the lady cleared out, and a week later Carlo came. His real name was Westonleigh, and he was a viscount or something, being eldest son of an earl; but we called him Carlo, and he grew jolly waxy when he found his nickname had got to Merivale before him. He fancied himself to a most hideous extent for a kid of nine, and explained he'd only come for a year or so before going to Eton. He went into the Lower Fourth, so Tomlin ceased to be at the bottom of that class.

The likeness between Carlo and my fag was really most peculiar. It must have been for Carlo's own mother to see it; but when Carlo heard that Tomlin would be a hatter in the course of years he refused to have anything to do with him. And Tom-

## The Human Boy

lin loathed Carlo, too, from the start ; so instead of being chums according to the wish of the purple - veined lord, they hated one another, and the first licking of any importance which Carlo got he had from Tomlin.

The chap was a failure all round, and it's no good saying he wasn't. Everybody saw it but Doctor Dunston, and he wouldn't. Carlo proved to be a sneak and a liar of the deepest sort — not to masters, but to the chaps ; and he was also jolly cruel to animals, and very much liked to torture things that couldn't hit him back, such as mice and insects. He had a square face and snubby nose, and a voice and eyes exactly similar to Tomlin's ; but there was no likeness in their characters, Tomlin being a very decent kid, as I have said. Fellows barred Carlo all round, and he only had one real chum in the miserable shape of Fowle. Fowle sucked up to him and listened for hours about his ancestors, and buttered him at all times, hoping, of course, that some day he would get asked to Carlo's father's castle in the holidays. I may also note Carlo never played games, excepting tossing behind the gym-



## Doctor Dunston's Howler

nasium for half-pennies with Fowle and Steggles, Steggles, of course, winning.

Happening one day to go down through the playground, young Tomlin saw Westonleigh near a little fir-tree which grew at the top of the drill-ground. He was alone, and seemed to be doing something queer, so Tomlin stopped and went over.

"What are you up to?" he said.

"Frying ants," said Carlo, "though it's no business of yours. You see, there's turpentine juice come out of this tree where I cut it yesterday, and you can stick the ants in it, then fry them to a cinder with a burning-glass, like this."

"That's what you're doing?"

"It is."

"Don't you think you're rather a little beast?"

"What d' you mean, hatter?"

"I mean I'm going to kick you for being such a cruel beast."

They stood the same height to an inch and were the same age, so it was a perfectly sportsman-like thing for Tomlin to offer.

## The Human Boy

“You seem to forget who you’re talking to,” said Carlo.

“No, I don’t—no chance of that. Your ancestors came over with William the Conqueror—carried his portmanteau, I expect, then cleared out when the fighting came on. Yes, and another ancestor stabbed a friend of Wat Tyler’s when he was face down on the ground, after somebody else had knocked him over. That’s what you are, ant-fryer.”

“I’ll thank you to let me pass,” said Carlo. “I’m not accustomed to talking to people like you, and if you think I’m going to fight with a future hatter you’re wrong.”

“Then you can put your tail between your legs and swallow this,” said Tomlin, and he went on and licked Carlo pretty well. He also broke his burning-glass.

“You’ll live to be sorry for this all your life!” yelled out Carlo, when Tomlin let him get up off some broken flower-pots on the drill-ground. “I’ll never forget it; I’ll get my father to make old Dunston expel you; and when I’m a man I’ll devote all my time to wrecking your vile hat business and ruin-

## Doctor Dunston's Howler

ing you and making you a shivering, starving beggar in the streets !”

“Go and sneak, I should,” said Tomlin.

And blessed if Carlo didn't ! He tore straight off to the Doctor just as he was, in his licked condition.

That much I heard from my fag, young Tomlin, but the rest I saw for myself, as the Sixth happened to be before the Doctor in his study when Carlo arrived. He was white and muddy, and slightly bloody and panting ; he looked jolly wicked, and his collar had carried away from the stud, and his trousers were torn behind.

“My good lad, whatever has happened ?” began the Doctor. “Don't say you have met with an accident ? And yet your appearance—”

“Nothing of the sort,” said Carlo, who soon found out the Doctor had a weak place for him, owing to his being a lord's son. “I've been frightfully and cruelly mangled through no fault of my own ; and I believe some things inside me are broken too.”

“Sit down, sit down, my unfortunate lad,” said the Doctor. Then he rang the bell and

## The Human Boy

told the butler to bring Viscount Westonleigh a glass of wine at once.

“It’s Tomlin done it,” said Carlo. “He came up behind me, and, before I could defend myself, he trampled on me and tried to tear me limb from limb. I’m not strong, and I may die of it. Anyway, he ought to be expelled, and I’ll write to my father, the earl, about it, and he’ll make the whole country-side resound if Tomlin isn’t sent away and his character ruined.”

“Hush, Westonleigh!” said the Doctor. “Have no fear that justice will not be done, my boy. You shall yourself accuse Tomlin and hear what he may have to say in defence.”

Then Tomlin was sent for, and in about ten minutes came.

“Is this true, boy Tomlin?” said the Doctor, putting on his big manner. “One glance at your victim,” he continued, “furnishes a more conclusive reply to my question than could any word of yours; nevertheless, I desire to hear from your own lips whether Viscount Westonleigh’s assertions are true or not.”

## Doctor Dunston's Howler

“Don't know what he's asserted, sir,” said Tomlin, which was a smart thing for a kid to say. “If he said I've licked him, it's true, sir.”

“That is what he *did* assert, sir, in words chosen with greater regard for my feelings than your own. And are you aware, George Tomlin, that you have ‘licked’ one who, in the ordinary course of nature, and subject to the will of an all-just, all-seeing Providence, will some day take his seat in the House of Lords?”

“I've heard him *say* he will, sir,” answered Tomlin, as though no statement of Carlo's could be worth believing.

“Don't answer in that offensive tone, boy,” answered the Doctor, his voice rising to the pitch that always went before a flogging. “If your stagnant sense of right cannot bring a blush to your cheek before the spectacle of your scandalous achievement, it will be necessary for me—for me, your head-master, sir—to quicken the blood in your veins and bring a blush to the baser extremity of your person. Some learn through the head, George Tomlin; some

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can only be approached through the hide ; and with the latter category you have long, unhappily, chosen to throw in your lot."

Tomlin said nothing, but looked at Carlo.

"Before proceeding, according to my custom, I shall hear both sides of this question — *audi alteram partem*, George Tomlin. Now say what you have to say ; explain why your lamentable, your unholy, your aboriginal passions led you to fall upon Viscount Westonleigh from behind—to take him in the rear, sir, after the unmanly fashion of the North American Indian or other primitive savage."

"I didn't take him in the rear at all, sir," said Tomlin. "I stood right up to him, and he said he wouldn't fight a future hatter."

"A very proper decision, too, sir—a natural and wise decision," declared the Doctor. "Why should the son of Lord Gollightly imbue his hand in the blood of—I will not say a future hatter, for I yield to no man in my respect for your father, Tomlin, and his business is alike honorable and necessary ; but why should he fight anybody ?"

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"If he's challenged he's got to, sir, or else take a licking."

"No flippancy, sir !" thundered the Doctor again. "Who are *you* to announce the laws which govern the society of Merivale ? Shall it be possible in a Christian land, at a Christian college for Christian lads, to find infamous boys with tigrine instincts parading the fold for the purpose of smiting when and where they will ? This, sir, is the very apotheosis of savagery !"

"I didn't do it for nothing, sir," said Tomlin. "I'm not going to sneak, of course; but I—I licked Carlo for a jolly good reason, and he knows what."

"Don't know anything of the sort," declared Carlo. "You flew at me like a wolf from behind."

"That's a good one," answered Tomlin.

"Anybody can see you did from the state I'm in," said Carlo.

"You two boys," began the Doctor again, "though you know it not, stand here before me as types of a great social movement, I may even say upheaval. In the democratic age upon which we are now entering, we

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shall find the Tomlins at war with the Westonleighs ; we shall find the Westonleighs disdaining to fight, and the Tomlins accordingly doing what pleases them in their own brutal way. Now, here I find myself met with statement and counter-statement. The indictment is all too clear against you, boy Tomlin, for even the glass of old brown sherry which he has just consumed fails to soothe your unfortunate victim's nerve-centres. He is still far from calm ; his ganglions are yet vibrating. This work of destruction was yours. You do not deny it, but you refuse any explanation, making instead a vague and ambiguous reference to not sneaking. No man hates the tale-bearer more than your head-master, sir, but there are occasions when the school's welfare and the protection of our little commonwealth make it absolutely necessary that offences should be reported to the ruler of that commonwealth. I have no hesitation in saying that Westonleigh saw the present incident in this light. He had no right to hush up the matter. Whatever his private instincts towards mercy, his duty to his companions



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and to me, together with a hereditary sense of justice and the fearless instincts of his race, compelled him to come before me and report the presence of a young garroter in our midst. I select the word, George Tomlin, and I say that, having regard to the perverted, not to say inverted, sense of justice and honor all too common among every community of boys, Westonleigh's act was a brave act. I accept his statement in its entirety; consequently, Tomlin, you may join me this evening, at nine o'clock, after prayers."

That meant a flogging, and Tomlin said, "Yes, sir," and hooked it; but the wretched Carlo thought he was going to hear Tomlin expelled. He burst out and said as much, and the Doctor started as if a serpent had stung him, and told Carlo to control the instinct of revenge so common to all human nature, and explained that chaps were not expelled for trifles. He reminded Carlo that Tomlin had an immortal soul like himself, and seemed to imply that being expelled from Merivale would ruin a chap's future in the next world as well as this one. Finally,

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he allowed Carlo, in consideration of the dressing he had got, to stop in the playground that afternoon with a book. So the little skunk crept off, shattered ganglions and all, pretending to walk lame ; while the Doctor, evidently much bothered altogether, took up our work where he had left it.

\* \* \* \* \*

Tomlin got flogged all right, and there the matter ended, excepting that a lot of fellows sent Carlo to Coventry and called him "ant-fryer" from that day.

Then, within three weeks, came the Doctor's howler, Steggles being responsible. Steggles is a bit of a hound, but his cunning is wonderful. As for the Doctor, he continued making much of Carlo and sitting on Tomlin, till one day, going into chapel, he unexpectedly patted Tomlin on the head. Tomlin was rather pleased, because he thought the Doctor was relenting to him ; but when Steggles heard of it he said :

"Why, you fool, he thought he was patting Westonleigh !"

Then, on an evening when Tomlin was

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cooking a sausage for me in the Sixth's class-room, he said :

“ Please, I should like to speak to you, if I may.”

So I chucked work, and told him to say what he liked.

“ It's only to show how things go against a chap, no matter what he does,” said the kid. “ This term I have been flogged for licking Carlo, and caned three times since for other things, which were more bad luck than anything else ; and now I'll be flogged again to-morrow for absolute certain.”

“ Why ?”

“ Well, it's a jolly muddle. You know Steggles ?”

“ Yes, you're a fool to go about with him,” I said.

“ Perhaps I was. Anyway, Steggles and me made a plot to get some of the medlars from the tree on the lawn, and we minched out after dark to do it. They're simply allowed to fall and rot on the ground, which is a waste of good tuck, Steggles says. We went out about ten o'clock last night, past Browne's study window ; and we looked in

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from the shrubbery to see the window open, and soda-water and whiskey and pipes on the table; but no Browne, strange to say. Then we sneaked on, and Steggles suddenly heard something and got funky, but I kept him going. We reached the tree and Steggles lighted his bull's-eye lantern, so as to collect the medlars, when suddenly out from behind the tree itself rushed a man. We hooked it like lightning, naturally, and I never saw Steggles go at such a pace in my life, and he stuck to his lantern, too; but I tripped and fell, and before I could get up the man had collared me. If you'll believe it, the man was Browne! He asked me who the other chap was, and I said I couldn't be quite sure; so he told me to go back to bed, which I did. That was last night; and the one medlar we had time to get Steggles had eaten before I got back, which shows what Steggles is. To-day Browne will tell the Doctor. He always chooses the evening after prayers, so that he can work the Doctor up with his stories and get a chap flogged right away; because it often happens when Doctor Dunston

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says he'll flog a chap next day he doesn't do it."

"And what is Steggles going to do?"

"He says he is watching events. He also says that Browne was certainly stealing the Doctor's medlars himself, and really we surprised him, not he us; but, of course, Steggles says it's no good my telling the Doctor that. Steggles also says that he's got an idea which may come to something. I don't know; but he's a very cute chap. I've got to keep out of the way after prayers to-night, and Steggles is going to watch Browne. He won't tell me his plan. I thought once that perhaps he meant giving himself up for me, and I asked him, and he said I ought to know him better."

Tomlin then cleared out, and as the Doctor took Slade and me for a short Greek lesson every evening after prayers, because of special examinations, I had the good luck to see the end of the business that very night.

We'd just got to work by the Doctor's green-shaded reading-lamp when Browne came in with his grovelling way, pretending he was awfully sorry for having to round on

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Tomlin, but that his duty gave him no option, and so on.

“Last night,” he said, “I was sitting correcting exercises in my study when I fancied I saw a form steal across the grass outside. Thinking some vagabond might be in the grounds, I dashed out and followed as quickly as possible. Presently I saw a light, and noted two figures under the medlar-tree. Fearing they might be plotting against the house, I went straight at them, and, to my astonishment, saw that they were only boys. One darted away, and I failed to catch him; the other, I much regret to say, was Tomlin.”

That is how Browne put the affair.

“Tomlin again!” exclaimed the Doctor. “Positively that boy’s behavior passes the bounds of endurance.”

“Yes, taking the medlars of one who has always treated him as you have. I couldn’t trust myself to speak to him. He’s a very disappointing boy.”

“He’s a disgraceful, degenerate, disreputable boy! I can forgive much; but the stealing of fruit—and that *my* fruit! Greediness, immorality, ingratitude in the person

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of one outrageous lad ! I thank you, Browne. Yours was a zealous act, and argued courage of high order. Oblige me by sending Tomlin hither at once. There shall be no delay."

Browne hurried off to find the wretched Tomlin; and Doctor Dunston, who always had to work up his feelings before flogging a chap, snorted like a horse, and took off his glasses, and went to the corner behind the book-case where canes and things were kept. He seemed to forget Slade and me, so we sat tight in the gloom outside the radius of light thrown by the green-shaded lamp, and waited with regret to see Tomlin catch it. The Doctor talked to himself as he brought out a birch and swished it through the air once or twice.

"Upon my soul," he said, "Lord Godlightly's son was right. His knowledge of character is remarkable in so young a lad. Tomlin will have to be expelled; Tomlin must go; such consistent, such inherent depravity appears ineradicable. Pruning is of no avail; the branch must be sacrificed. My medlars under cover of darkness! And I

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would have given them freely had he but asked !”

He evidently wasn't going to expel Tomlin this time, but he meant doing all he knew with the birch; and as Tomlin was some while coming, the Doctor's safety-valves were regularly humming before he turned up. When he did come he walked boldly in; and the Doctor, who had been striding up and down like a lion at the Zoo, didn't wait for any remarks, but just went straight for him, seized him by the nape of the neck, nipped his hand round his back—in a way he did very neatly from long practice—and began to administer about the hottest flogging he'd given to any boy in his life.

“So—you—add—the—eighth—com—mand—ment—to—the—others—you—have—already—shattered—deplorable—boy!” roared the Doctor, giving Tomlin one between each smack. “You—would—purloin—steal—rob—the medlars—of your preceptor. You would lead others—to—share—your—sin. You would bring—tears—of—grief—to—a—good—mother's—eyes!”



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Here the Doctor stopped a moment for breath, but he still held on to Tomlin, who, much to my surprise, wriggled about a good deal. In fact, he shot out his legs over and over again at intervals, like a grasshopper does when it gets into the water; and when he got a chance he yelled back at the Doctor:

"It's a lie—a filthy lie!" he shrieked out. "Beast—devil! Let me go! Let me go! I never touched your rotten old medlars—oh!—oh!"

Then the Doctor went off again.

"Silence, miserable child! Cease your blasphemies. Falsehood—will—not—save—you—now!"

"I never touched them, I tell you, you muddle-headed old beast! You're killing me, and my father'll imprison you for life for it. I wish they could hang you. I'll make you smart for this if you only live till I grow up—devil!"

But the Doctor had shot his bolt. He gave Tomlin a final smack, then shook him off like a spider, picked up his mortar-board, which had fallen off in the struggle, and put the birch in its place.

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“Now go, and don’t speak another word, or I shall expel you, wretched lad!”

Meantime Slade and I were fairly on the gasp, for from the time that Tomlin, as we thought, had called the Doctor a devil we realized the truth. Now his passion nearly choked him; he danced with pain and rage; only when the Doctor took a stride towards him he opened the door and hooked it.

The Doctor puffed and grunted like a traction-engine trying to get up a hill.

“These are the black days in a head-master’s life, Slade,” he said. “That misguided lad thinks that I enjoyed administering his punishment, yet both mentally and physically the operation caused me far greater suffering than it brought to him. I am wounded—wounded to the heart—and the exertion causes and will cause me much discomfort for hours to come, owing to its unusual severity. I may say that not for ten years has it been necessary for me to flog a boy as I have just flogged George Tomlin. Now let us proceed.”

I couldn’t have broken it to him, but Slade did. He said :

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"Please, sir, it wasn't Tomlin."

"Not Tomlin—not Tomlin! What d'you mean, boy? Who was it, then?" said the Doctor, his eyebrows going up on to his forehead, which was all quite dewy from the hard work.

"It was young Carlo—I mean Westonleigh," said Slade.

"Viscount Westonleigh!" gasped the Doctor, his mouth dropping right open in a very rum way by itself, if you understand me.

"Yes, sir."

"Then why in the name of Heaven didn't you say so? How *dare* you stand there and watch me commit an offence against law and justice? How did you dare to watch me ignorantly torture an innocent boy, and that boy— Go! go both of you—you, Slade, and you, Butler, also. Go instantly, and send Browne and Viscount Westonleigh to me. Good God! this is terrible—terrible!"

So that was his howler, and to see him in his chair looking so old and haggard and queer was rather frightful. He seemed suddenly struck with limpness, and his

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hands shook like anything, and so did his bald head ; and he puffed as if he'd been running miles ; and Slade said afterwards that he looked jolly frightened too. He put his face in his hands as we went out, and we heard him say something about Lord Godlightly and ruin, and universal opprobrium on his gray hairs, though really he had none worth mentioning ; and Slade said he almost thought the Doctor was actually going to cry, if such a thing could be possible.

We sent Browne off to him, but Carlo wasn't to be found. He'd been seen yelling somewhere, but couldn't be traced. What had happened was this : Tomlin, in obedience to Steggles, had kept rather close after prayers ; in fact, he had spent the half-hour to bed-time in a cupboard in the gymnasium. under the rubber shoes. So Browne, not finding him, had told the first boy he saw to do so ; and that boy happened to be Steggles, who had been at his heels ever since he went to the Doctor. Steggles is a miserable, unwholesome thing, but his strategy certainly comes off. Once having the message, all was easy, because Steggles

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merely found Carlo, and told him the Doctor wanted him. The result was much better than even Steggles hoped ; because, though the Doctor generally fell on a chap who came to be flogged straightaway, like he did on Carlo, it wasn't often anybody got such a frightful strong dose as Carlo had. Afterwards, when taxed, Steggles swore, of course, that he thought he was talking to Tomlin. Seeing the likeness, this might have been perfectly true, though in their secret hearts everybody knew Steggles too jolly well to really believe it.

Carlo didn't turn up, and after an hour or more of frantic rushing about, somebody said perhaps he'd jumped down the garden well owing to the indignity of what he'd got. But soon afterwards, in reply to a special telegram sent for the Doctor by the people at the railway station, an answer came from Golightly Towers, twenty miles off, where the purple-veined lord, father of Carlo, hung out. The kid, it seemed, had sloped down to Merivale railway station after his licking, and taken a ticket right away for Golightly, and gone home by the last train

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but one that night. He never returned either, but next day his father dropped in on Doctor Dunston, and Fowle managed to hear a little of what went on through the key-hole. He said that as far as he could make out the lord didn't think much of the matter, and said one thrashing more or less wouldn't mar Carlo. But the lord's wife, who didn't come, evidently took the same view as Carlo, for he never returned to Dunston's again. The Doctor's howler ended in his losing the little bounder altogether, which, with his views about lords in general, and especially earls, must have been frightfully rough on him.

As to Tomlin, actually the Doctor never flogged him after all! I think his spirit had got a bit broken, and though Tomlin went at the end of the term, he wasn't expelled, but withdrawn by mutual consent, like you hear of things in Parliament sometimes. He wouldn't have gone at all, but he refused to say who was under the medlar-tree with him, and stuck to it; and Steggle absolutely declined to give himself up, because, as he truly said, he had more than

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kept his promise to Tomlin about helping him out of the mess.

So Tomlin went. He was a very decent little chap indeed, and nearly all the fellows at Dunston's promised faithfully to buy their hats entirely at his place in Bond Street, London, when they left school; which will be very good business for him if they do. As for the Doctor, it's a peculiar fact that for a whole term after Carlo's affair he never flogged a single chap. He didn't seem to have any heart in him, somehow, owing to the rum way the howler told upon his spirit.

## Morrant's Half-Sov.

**O**F course, as Steggles said truly, the rum-mest thing about the whole story of Morrant's half-sov. was that he should have one. Morrant, in fact, never got any pocket-money in his life, owing to his father being a gentleman farmer. Not that he had nothing. On the contrary, his hampers were certainly the best, except Fowle's, that ever came to Dunston's, both for variety and size and fruit. The farming business, Morrant said, was all right from his point of view in the holidays, as the ferreting, both rats and rabbits, was good enough for anything, and three packs of hounds met within walking distance of his farm, one pack being harriers, which Morrant, by knowing the country well, could run with to a certain extent while they hunted. But Morrant's father was so worried about chemical manures and other farming things, in-



## Morrant's Half-Sov.

cluding the price of wheat, that he didn't see his way to giving Morrant any pocket-money. He explained to Morrant once that he was putting every halfpenny he could spare into Morrant's education, so as to save him from having to become a gentleman farmer too when he grew up.

But Morrant didn't get a farthing in a general way ; so when there arrived a hamper with an envelope in it, and in the envelope a bit of paper, and in the paper a half-sovereign, Morrant was naturally extremely surprised and also pleased. It came from his godfather, who had never taken any notice of Morrant for thirteen years, though he was a clergyman. But the previous term Morrant had got a prize for Scripture history, and when that came to his godfather's ears, through Morrant's mother mentioning it in a letter, he wrote and said it was good news, and very unexpected. So he sent the money ; and really Morrant was quite bewildered with it, being so utterly unaccustomed to tin even in the meanest shape.

He had a friend by the name of Ferrars, who was much more religious than Morrant

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himself, and knew even more Scripture history; and as a first go-off he asked Ferrars what he ought to do with the money. And Ferrars said that before everything Morrants ought to give a tithe to charity. But when it was explained to Morrants that this meant chucking away a shilling on the poor, he didn't take to the idea an atom. He said his father had set him against giving tithes, not believing in them very much.

So Morrants went to Gideon, who knew much more about money than Ferrars, and he said on no account to give a penny away in charity, because Morrants wasn't up in the subject, and might do more harm than good. He also said that in the case of a chap who had never had a half-sovereign in his life before, it was a great question whether he could be expected to give away any; and Morrants said there was no question about it at all, because he wasn't going to. And it made even a difference in his feeling towards Ferrars, for, as he very truly said, a chap who advised him like Ferrars had couldn't be much of a friend.

Having decided to keep it, the point was

## Morrant's Half-Sov.

what to do with it. The novelty of the thing staggered him, and, knowing he would probably never have another half-sovereign till he grew up, Morrant felt the awful importance of spending it right, because an affair once bought could never be replaced if lost. And, as Bray said, "If you get used to a thing, like a watch-chain or a tie-ring, and then lose it, the feeling you get is much worse than if you had never had it at all."

I thought about it too for Morrant, as he once sent me a brace of rabbits by post, shot by himself in the holidays. I pointed out to him that half a sovereign was a most difficult sum really, being, as it were, not small and not exactly huge, and yet too much to make light of, especially in Morrant's case. If he had got a sovereign, for instance, he might have bought a silver watch-chain to take the place of one which he had. It was made of the hair of his grandmother when she was young, and Morrant didn't much like it, and had often tried to sell it and failed. But ten bob wouldn't buy a silver chain worth having. Morrant had an idea about braces, and of course he

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might have bought such braces for the money as would have been seldom seen and very remarkable; but braces are a poor thing to put good money into, and I dissuaded him.

There came a change in Morrant after he had had the half-sovereign for four days and not thought of anything to buy. He began to worry, because time was going on and nothing being done. Fellows gave him many ideas, some of which he took for an hour or two, but always abandoned after a while. Murray told him of a wonderful box of new conjuring tricks which was to be had, and he nearly bought it, but luckily remembered just in time that the new tricks would get old after a while, and some might be guessed and would become useless. Then Parkinson had a remarkably swagger paint-box, and knew where Morrant could get another with only three paints less for ten shillings. And Morrant as near as a toucher bought that, but happened to remember he couldn't paint, and didn't care in the least about trying to. Corkey minimus said he would run the risk and sell Corkey minor's

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bat to Morrant for ten bob, the bat having cost twelve. The bat was spliced and Corkey minor was in Australia, having, luckily for him, sailed to sea just before an exam., owing to a weak lung. If Morrant had played cricket he would certainly have bought the bat; but there again, even though Gideon told him he might easily get ten-and-six or eleven shillings for the bat next term, he hesitated, and finally Gideon bought the bat himself—as an investment, he said.

Well, there was Morrant stuck with his tin. He wouldn't even change it, because Gideon warned him against that, and told him his father knew men who had made large fortunes simply by not changing gold when they had it. Gideon said there was nothing like never changing gold; so Morrant didn't, only of course there was no good in keeping the money specially stitched into a private and unknown part of his trousers, as he did, for safety.

That half-sovereign acted like a regular cloud on Morrant's mind; and then came an extraordinary day when it acted more like a cloud than ever, owing to its disappearing.

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Morrant had sewn it, with a needle and thread borrowed from the housekeeper, into a spot at the bottom of his left trouser-pocket, and from this spot it mysteriously vanished in the space of two hours and a half. He had changed in the dormitory for "footer," and left his trousers on his bed at three o'clock, returning to them at 4.45. Then, naturally feeling for his half-sovereign, he missed it altogether, and when he examined the spot he found his money had been cut out of the bottom of the pocket with a knife.

Very wisely Morrant, seeing what a tremendous thing had happened, did not make a lot of row, but just told about ten chaps and no more. I was one. My name is Newnes. I said :

"The first question is, Who knew your secret hiding-place?" and Butler said it was a very good question and showed sense in me. Butler is, of course, high in the Sixth.

Morrant, on thinking it over, decided that three chaps, or four at the outside, knew his hiding-place. They were Ferrars, Gideon, Fowle, and, Morrant thought, Phipps. So

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first Butler, who very kindly undertook the affair for Morrant, had Phipps brought up. Phipps stammers even when most calm and collected, and, being sent for by Butler, caused him so much excitement that Butler made him write down the answers to his questions, and even then Phipps lost his nerve so that he spelled "yes" with two s's. But he solemnly put down and signed that Morrant had never told him where he kept his half-sovereign; and after he had gone Morrant said that, now he came to think about it, he felt sure Phipps was right. Which reduced the matter to Ferrars, Gideon, and Fowle; and the first two were set aside by Morrant because Ferrars was, of course, his personal friend, despite the passing coldness about Ferrars' advice, and Gideon, though very keen about money and a great judge of it, was known to be absolutely straight, and had never so much as choused a kid out of a marble.

Butler said :

"That leaves Fowle; and if you told Fowle you were a little fool."

And Morrant said :

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“ We were both Roman Catholics by religion, and that makes a great tie ; and though many chaps hate Fowle pretty frightfully, I’ve never known him try to score off me, except once, when he failed and apologized.”

And Butler said :

“ That’s all right, I dare say ; but he’s a little beast and a cur, and also a sneak of the deadliest dye. I don’t say he’s taken the money, because that’s a libel, and he might, I believe, go to law against me ; but I do say that only one out of three people could have taken it, and we know two didn’t, therefore Q.E.D. the other must have.”

Morrant didn’t follow this very clever reasoning on the part of Butler. He only thought that Fowle, being a Roman Catholic, would never rob another ; and Butler said he would, because it wasn’t like Freemasons, who wouldn’t score off one another for the world. He explained that history was simply choked up with examples of Roman Catholics scoring off one another.

Butler said :

“ Religion’s quite different. One Buddhist



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is often known to have done another Buddhist in the eye, so why shouldn't one Roman do another? In fact, they have thousands of times, as you'll know when you come to read a little history and hear about the Spanish Inquisition. Especially this may have happened seeing that Fowle is the chap. I tell you candidly that, in my opinion, after a good deal of experience of fellows in general, I take Fowle to be the most likely boy in Merivale to have done it; and knowing him to have had the secret of the private pocket reduces it to a certainty in my mind. Tax him with it suddenly in the night, and you'll see."

Morrant slept in the same dormitory with Fowle, and that night the whole room was woke up at some very late hour by the sound of Morrant taxing Fowle. Fowle took a long time to realize what was being said, and when he was awake enough to realize what Morrant was getting at, he showed tremendous indignation, and asked what he had ever done that such a charge should be brought against him, especially at such a time. He reminded Morrant that they were of the same way of

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thinking in holy affairs, and said he was extremely sick with Marrant, and thought Marrant's religion must be pretty rocky if it allowed him to wake a chap up in the night and charge him with such a crime. In fact, Fowle went on so that Marrant finally apologized rather humbly.

From that day forward began the extraordinary disappearance of coin in general at Dunston's. Shillings constantly went, and also half-crowns. Gideon got very excited about it, and said watches must be kept and traps set. There was evidently a big robbery going on, and Gideon said if the chaps weren't smart enough to catch the thief they deserved to lose their tin. Certainly he never lost a penny himself. But, despite tremendous precautions, money kept going in small sums. Ferrars was set to watch in the pavilion, I remember, during a football match, and Marrant himself, and even Butler once or twice, also watched. Some chaps thought it was the ground-man; but as money also disappeared at school, that showed it couldn't be him. And then there was a theory that it might be a charwoman who

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came from Merivale twice a week. I believe she was a very good charwoman of her kind, and Ferrars, who is great about helping the poor and so on, told me she was a very deserving woman with a husband at home who drank, and children too numerous to mention. Which Gideon remembered against the charwoman when the money began to go, and it turned his suspicion towards her, because, as he said, with the state of her home affairs, money must be a great temptation. So a watch was set on her, and a curious thing happened.

Being small, I can get into a boot cupboard very easily, and I can also breathe anywhere through a hole bored with a gimlet. This was done to the door of the boot cupboard, and two other rather larger holes were also made for my eyes. Mrs. Gouger, which was the charwoman's name, had to do a lot of work in this room—a large one leading out of the gym. And there, on a certain half-holiday, I was watching her.

She worked jolly hard as far as I could say, and made a good deal of dust, and a

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curious noise through her teeth when she scrubbed, which I thought only men did when they washed horses; but there was nothing suspicious, if you understand me. She didn't touch a coat or anything, though many were hanging against a wall; and the few caps about she merely picked up and hung on the pegs.

Then, just before she finished, who should come in but Ferrars, and, to my great astonishment, Mrs. Gouger courtesied to him as though he had been the housekeeper or the Doctor.

Ferrars treated her with great loftiness, and evidently knew all about her private affairs.

He said:

“And how is the child that's got mumps?” and she said it was better. He then gave her some advice about her husband, which I didn't hear, and she blessed him for all his goodness to her, and said God had sent him to a lone, struggling woman, and that he would reap a thousandfold what he had sown. All of which, coming from Mrs. Gouger to Ferrars, seemed very curious to me. Presently he said:

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“Well, I cannot stop longer. I’m glad the child is better. Keep on at your husband about the pledge; and here’s a shilling.”

Then Mrs. Gouger put the shilling in her pocket and blessed him again. And Ferrars went.

That very day young Forrest lost a shilling out of his desk, which doesn’t lock, owing to Forrest having taken the lock off to sell to Meadows last term.

I told Butler and Gideon what I had seen, and Butler thought it rum, and Gideon said there was more in it than met the eye.

Butler said :

“Evidently the kid” (Ferrars is a kid from Butler’s point of view) “has given the charwoman tin before, or else she wouldn’t have blessed him. Now the question is, How much pocket-money does Ferrars get?”

And I said :

“A shilling a week.”

“When does he get it?”

“Mondays.”

## The Human Boy

Butler said, "Ah!" but nothing seemed to strike him, and Gideon thought that Mrs. Gouger ought to be spoken to. This Gideon undertook to do; and the next week he did. What happened was that Mrs. Gouger said all that she had before said to Ferrars about her husband and children, but added that a young gentleman with a most Christian heart had lately interested himself in her misfortunes. Gideon asked if it was a Dunston chap, and Mrs. Gouger answered that she was not at liberty to say. She seemed rather defiant about it, Gideon thought, and, in fact, when he pressed her for the amount the chap gave her, she told Gideon to mind his own business. A watch was still kept, especially on Ferrars; and once Butler did an awfully cunning thing by setting Ferrars to watch and setting another chap to watch Ferrars, if you follow what I mean. The other chap was Butler himself, and the room was a dormitory. But it came out rather awkwardly for Butler, because he sneezed at the very start, and Ferrars got out from under the bed where he had arranged to watch, and found Butler watching

## Morrant's Half-Sov.

behind a coat against the wall. Then they had a row, because Ferrars evidently thought Butler was there to watch him; which he was.

The end of the affair came out rather tame in its way, and only shows what awfully peculiar ideas some chaps have. Gideon finally spoke to Slade, the head of the school, and though Slade doesn't like Gideon, owing to his way of making money by usury, yet it was such a serious affair that he listened all through and promised to go to the Doctor. Gideon had actually kept an account of all the money stolen, and it amounted now to the tremendous sum of four pounds five shillings and sixpence, including Morrant's half-sovereign.

Then, after Dr. Dunston knew, we heard one day from Fowle that he had sent for Mrs. Gouger to his study, and that she had been there fully half an hour and come out crying. Fowle had listened as best he could till the Doctor's butler had come by and told him to hook it; but he had heard nothing except one remark in the voice of Mrs. Gouger, and that remark was, "Four pound

## The Human Boy

five and sixpence, sir, and a godsend if ever money was."

Gideon said her mentioning of the exact sum was a very ominous thing for Ferrars. And what was more ominous still happened that evening, for Ferrars wasn't at prep. or prayers.

There were a number of ideas about as to what it all meant, and Corkey minimus, who always tries to get among chaps bigger than himself and say clever things, came out with a theory that Mrs. Gouger was Ferrars's mother, and that Ferrars was therefore stealing and making the money over to her. But Butler merely smacked his head when he heard it, and told Corkey minimus not to be a little ass.

Gideon was the only chap who hadn't any idea. He knew Ferrars's great notions about helping the poor and giving tithes to parsons, and so on, but he said for a chap to steal money and hand it over to a charwoman in charity was contrary to human nature. All the same, if a thing actually happens, it can't be contrary to human nature. Anyway, after prayers next morning the Doctor stopped



## Morrant's Half-Sov.

the school in chapel and explained everything.

He said :

“ My boys, while it is true that you come to Merivale to be instructed by me and those who labor here among you on my behalf, it is also true that I learn occasionally from those whom I teach. Indeed, new problems are almost as often set by you for my solution as by me for yours, and seldom has a more intricate difficulty confronted me than that which yesterday challenged my attention. There has recently happened among us a mysterious disappearance of coins of the realm. Now a shilling, a sixpence, a penny-piece, if deposited in one spot, will usually remain there until removed by human agency. And the human agent who removes money which belongs to another without that other's sanction is a thief. Boys, briefly there has been a thief among you — a thief whose moral obliquity has taken such an extraordinary turn, whose views of rectitude have become so distorted, that even my own experience of school-boy ethics cannot parallel

## The Human Boy

his performance. This lad has looked around him upon the world, and found in it, as we all must find, a vast amount of suffering and privation, of honest toil and of humble heroism, displayed by the lowest among us. He has also observed that Providence is pleased to make wide distinctions between the rich and the poor ; he has noted that where one labors for daily bread another reaps golden harvests without the trouble of putting in the sickle. This extraordinary boy contrasted the position of one of these humble workers with that of those among whom his own lot was thrown here, and he found that whereas that obscure but necessary and excellent person, Mrs. Gouger, she whose duty it is to cleanse, scour, and otherwise purify the disorder produced by our assemblies—he found, I say, that whereas Mrs. Gouger worked extremely hard for sums not considerable, albeit handsome in connection with the nature of her labors, others of the human family—yourselves—were in receipt of weekly allowances of varying amounts for which you toiled not, neither did you spin.

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“This unhappy lad allowed his mind to brood on the apparent injustice of such an arrangement, and instead of coming to his head-master for an explanation of this and other problems which arose to puzzle his immature intelligence, permitted himself the immoral, the scandalous, the disgraceful and horribly mistaken course of righting the balance from his point of view. This could only be effected by defiance of those divine laws which govern all properly constituted bodies of human society. Ferrars—I need not conceal his name any longer—Ferrars broke one commandment in order to obey another. His fatuous argument, as it was elaborated yesterday to me, stands based on error ; his crime was the result of the most complicated ignorance and vicious sophism it has ever been my lot to discover in a boy of twelve. He did evil that good might come. Ascertaining from the inspired Word that ‘charity covereth a multitude of sins,’ he imagined it must extend to cover that forbidden by the Eighth Commandment. This commandment he broke no less than fourteen times. You ask with horror why.

## The Human Boy

That the domestic affairs of Mrs. Gouger might be ameliorated. He took the pocket-money of his colleagues, and with it modified those straits into which poverty and conjugal difficulties have long cast Mrs. Gouger. It was Ferrars's unhappy, and I may say unparalleled, design to go on appropriating the money of his school-mates until a sum of five pounds had been raised and conveyed to Mrs. Gouger. Of this total, with deplorable ingenuity, he had already subtracted from various pockets the sum of four pounds five shillings and sixpence ; it was his intention to continue these depredations until the entire sum had been collected. But the end has come. The facts have been placed before me, and I confess to you that perhaps never have I been confronted with a problem more peculiar. After a lengthy conversation with those who support me here, and after placing the proposition before a higher tribunal than any which earth has to offer, I have come to a curious decision. I have determined to leave the fate of the boy Ferrars in your hands. This time to-morrow I shall expect Slade, as representing the school, to

## Morrant's Half-Sov.

inform me of your decision, and to-day, contrary to custom, will be a half-holiday, that the school may debate the question and conclude upon it. I would point out that there is no middle course here, in my opinion. Either Ferrars must be forgiven after a public apology to the establishment he has outraged, or he must be expelled. As for the money, if those who have lost it will apply to me between one and two o'clock to-day, each shall have his share again."

Well, you may guess what a jaw there was that afternoon; and finally, after hours of talk, Slade decided the point must be arranged by putting papers into a hat. If you drew a cross on the paper it meant that you wanted Ferrars to be expelled; and if you drew a naught, that meant he was to be let off. You were not bound to say how you voted, and the excitement when the votes were counted was something frightful. Ferrars little knew what was going on.

At last the numbers were read out :

For expulsion . . . .	124
Against expulsion . . .	101

## The Human Boy

And Slade and Bradwell were mad when Slade read them, and said that Merivale was disgraced. But Gideon and Butler and Ashby major and Trelawny said not, and thought it wasn't a case for anything but justice. The Doctor made no remark when he heard what had happened, but I heard him tell the new master, Thompson, a day afterwards that perhaps the Lower School ought not to have been allowed to vote, as small boys would merely have understood that Ferrars had stolen money and nothing else. Their minds, the Doctor said, were not big enough to take in the peculiar nature of the case. But Thompson said he honestly believed the school was perfectly right, and that the subtleties of the case were not for that court; and the Doctor sighed and said it might be so.

Anyway, Ferrars went. We never saw him again, and the only cheerful thing about the end of it was that Steggles was badly scored off. You see he nipped off to the Doctor among the first, and said Ferrars had stolen ten shillings from him too. But it happened that Ferrars had kept the most

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careful account of all the money he had raised for Mrs. Gouger and the people he had raised it from. But he had never taken a farthing from Steggles. So Steggles was flogged by Mannering in his best form; which shows that things which are frightfully sad in themselves often produce fine results in a roundabout sort of manner.

P

## The Buckeneers

**O**F corse even a kid can get a good idea sometimes, and Maine, who I was fagging for, said afterwards that the idea was alright. Whether young Bailey or me thort of it first I don't know, but Maine lent me a book about coarseers and buckeneers and such like people, and he said it was a great life, though not much followed in present times. He was no good for a coarseer himself, becorse the sea always made him dreadfully bad, and, besides, he was going to be a bushranger some day, being an Australian and well up in it. But he said that Drake and Raleigh and many other men in our English history were buckeneers of the dedliest sort and had made England what it was; so me and Bailey thort a lot about it and wished a good deal we could begin that sort of life. Bailey said that in the books he'd



## The Buckeneers

read, if a boy began young, he was generally a super cargo and went on getting grater and grater slowly; but I thort boys began as cabin-boys and got grater very quickly by resquing people. But Bailey said that was only in books, and that nobody got on quickly at sea owing to the competitishun. He did not much think there were any buckeneers left, but Maine said there were, cheefly off the coast of Africa, and that daring and dedly deeds were done in the Mediterranean to this day. He said the lawlessness there was awful, and that nobodi knew what went on along the north side of Africa in little bays and inletts there not marked on maps.

When Bailey herd that, he took more interest in it and wished he had been born the son of a pirit insted of a doctor, because he said we should have come eesily to it if our fathers had been in that corse of life; but when I told Maine, he sed that the best and most splendid pirit had had to overcome grate dificultees in their youth, and that it was the pirit who began as a meer boy at school who often made the gratest name.

Bailey sed he was a pirit at heart, and I

## The Human Boy

sed I was to; but not untell we red a butiful book by Stevenson could we see any way to be one reelly. Then we saw that we must go away from Merivale in secret—in fact, we must fly; and Bailey sed it would have to be by night to avoid capture, and Maine sed it was so. But it was a tremendous thing to do, and I asked Bailey about his mother, and Bailey sed his mother would blub a good deal at first, but she would live to be proud of him when his name was wringing through England. And I felt the same in a way, becorse, though I have got no mother to blub, I have got an uncle, who is my gardian, and he is a lawer and a Conservitive who has tried to get into Parleyment and failed.

Then me and Bailey talked it out when chaps were asleep in our dormitory, and the thing was what we should reelly and truly be, becorse there were coarseers and buckeneers and pirts, and they all had their own pekuliar ways. So we asked Maine which was best, and he sed “buckeneers.” He didn’t seem to know exackty what a coar-seer was; but he told us all about pirts, and

## The Buckeneers

he sed they kill womin and childrin, and Bailey said he'd rather be a docter, like his father, than do that, and I said the same. But a buckeneer is very diferent, being like Raleigh and Drake; and a buckeneer may have his name wringing through England, but a pirit never has, being rather a beast reelly. Maine sed it was like this: a pirit always thinks of himself, and nobody else; but the best sort of buckeneer thinks of himself, of corse, but thinks of his country to; and after he has replennished his coffers he makes his sovereign a present of islands, and so on, which are gennerally called after him, so that his name may never be forgottun. And Bailey sed that was the sort he wanted to be, and I sed so to.

We thanked Maine a good deal, and he sed it was a big idea for such kids as us to get, and hoped we were made of the right stuff, and promised not to say a word to a soul. And we finally desided to try it, and Bailey sed we must have a plan of ackshun; so we made one.

He said we must run away and work gradully by night to the coast and go to

## The Human Boy

Plymouth, and get into the docks, and find a ship bound for the north coste of Africa. I asked him what next, and he sed, very truly, that that was enuff to begin with, and that by the time we had done that much manny adventures would have fallen to our lot, and we might alredy be in the way to become buckeneers. And I sed I hoped we should make freends at sea; but he sed the fewer freends we made the better buckeneers we should probbably be, because it is not a life where you can make freends safely. In fact, no reel buckeneer would trust his own brother a yard. And I sed that we must trust one annnuther at any rate. And Bailey sed, as far as that went, he supposed we must; but he sed it relluctantly.

The thing was then to save up for the diferent weppons. Maine sed we shouldn't want arms, and that money was all we should require till we got down south; but Bailey felt sure we must at leest have pistells, becorse in books the man armed to the teath is never mollested if people know, but the unarmed man often looses his life for want of a weppon. We had one shilling

## The Buckeneers

pocket-money a week each, and Bailey getting a birthday, very fortunately, made a whole pound by it after we had been saving for three weeks. So between us we suddenly had one pound six shillings, and Bailey sed it was share and share alike for the present, and always would be unless some dedly hatred sprang up between us. And I sed it never would ; but he sed it might, and if it did, it would probabbly be about a girl if books were true. And I larfed, becorse we both have a grate contemp for all girls.

Well, things went alright, and on a half-holiday we managed to get to Merivale and buy pistells. They were five shillings and sixpence each, and the man didn't seem to much like selling them ; but we got them, and amunition—fifty rounds each. And Bailey sed that would be enough. Maine sed they were very good pistells for close work, but advised us never to use them unless in soar straights. And we sed we wouldn't.

It was the day of the menaggeree at Merivale that me and Bailey finally took the grate step of going. We had collected

## The Human Boy

a lot of food, and studded geography so as to get to Plymouth, and we arranged that we should travel by night and hide by day in the hart of impennetrable woods, which we did. After the menaggeree, at a certain point on the way home, we slipped it round a corner, and Thompson didn't see us, and in a breef time we were at the edge of Merivale Woods, free.

"To - night," Bailey sed, "we will get across this forest and do eight or ten miles along the high-road, and so reach Oakshott Woods at dawn. They are on the edge of the moor and quite impennetrable."

So we got well into Merivale Woods first and made a lair of braken under a fir-tree. And we cut off some of the fir-tree bark and licked the sap, which is very nourishing and feeding, because we wanted to save our food as much as possible. But we had each a cold sorsage and a drink of water. And then night came on, and I felt, for the first time, that we had done a tremendous deed.

"We're fairly started," I sed to Bailey. "It's just call over at Merivale now."

## The Buckeneers

And he sed, "Yes; if the fellows in the upper third could only see us!"

I sed, "It's a small begenning."

And he sed, "It is; but if things go rite, and we are made of the propper stuff for buckeneers, we'll make England wring yet."

Then it began to rain rather hard, and I found that a wood isn't really a dry place by night if it rains, and Bailey lighted a match, and sed it was nearly nine.

"That'll mean 'lights out' at Merivale," he sed; "but for us it'll mean the begenning of the night."

I sneazed just about then, becorse water from the fir-tree was dropping down my neck rather fast, and Bailey sed if I was going to get annything the matter with me I had better go back at once, becorse no buckeneer ever had a cold, being men of steel and iron. And I sed a sneaze was nothing.

Then we started very corsiously through the wood, and Bailey cocked his pistell, and I asked him kindly to walk in front, feeling a curious sensashun when he walked behind

## The Human Boy

me with his pistell cocked. I told him, and he sed it was fear, but I sed it was kaution.

Sometimes he whispered, "Cave!" and we sunk down and got fritefully dripping in the wet, but nothing happened, and we were getting well on through the wood when Bailey sed, "Cave!" again, and this time, when we had sunk down, we distinkly herd a footstep, and Bailey sed it was our first adventure, and I sed I wished it had come by daylight, becorse it wants grate practise to face adventures in the dark at first.

Anyway the noise got nearer and got louder, and Bailey and me both cocked our pistells, and he sed, "Reserve your fire to close range," and I sed, "Yes." Then he sed, "I see the thing. It's bigger than a beast you would expect in an English wood"; and I sed, "I have got a sort of fealing it is something out of the men-aggerie"; and he sed, "Then it will be a real adventure, and I wish we were up trees."

But it was to late, and something went quite close. I sore a red spark, and Bailey sed, "Fire!" which we did. At leest my



## The Buckeneers

pistell went off with fereful effect; but Bailey's didn't, and he sed afterwards that he'd make the pistell man biterly rew the day he sold him a treecherous weppon.

But after I fired we herd a human voice, and it sed, "Hell!" Then it sed other fearful words, which Bailey sed we ought to remember because they were buckeneering words curiously enuff. And then the man dashed towards us, which showed I had not slain him, or even hit him in a vittle spot; and we fled, and soon we found that we had distanced him, though we had a squeek for it.

"He was a keeper," sed Bailey, "and he will think we were poachers, and raise a hue-and-cry. We must keep on and get into Oakshott Woods, or we shall very likely have to yield to supereer force."

After this eksitement I got a curious feeling in my stomach, and telling Bailey, he sed it was either hunger or fear. And I sed it was hunger; but Bailey sed, seeing what a hevy meal we had made with sorsage and bred and turpentine juice only two hours before, that it was fear.

## The Human Boy

I sed if he thought so he'd better go on without me, as I hadn't taken to this corse of life to be cheeked by him. And he sed he was leeder of the gang, and I was the gang, and the first thing was to lern to obey orders. And then I got rather cross with Bailey, and asked him who he thort he was to give me orders, and reminded him my pistell could go off anyway, which was more than his could. This worried him a good deal, becorse, of course, the man whose pistell went off had the best of it. Then he sed that it was no good having a quarrel between ourselves while we were not yet out of danger. He also said that he beleaved we might venture to take one hour's sleep to strengthen us before getting on to Oakshott, and I sed, "Yes," but thought that one of us ought to watch while the other slept. Bailey said he would watch first, and he sed also that we might get to the woodman's hut in the middle of Merivale Woods if we kept on past a ded fir-tree with its stem white, becorse all the bark was off, which we did, becorse the moon was now shining very britely, and the rain had

## The Buckeneers

stopped. The cold was also friteful, and my teath chattered once or twice, but I broke sticks and things to attract Bailey, becorse if he had herd my teath he would have sed it was fear again.

Once a bough jumped back and hit Bailey a friteful smack in the face, and I was glad, and he sed he rather thort his eye was done for; and he sed it didn't much matter if it was, so long as he had one good eye to see with, becorse most buckeneers lost an eye sooner or later, though generally with a stroak from a cutlass.

We found the hut, and there was some dry fern in it, and we lighted a candle-end we had, and took off our boots, and wrung out our socks, and each had half a currant dumpling. Then Bailey looked at his watch and sed I might turn in for half an hour. Then he would wake me and turn in for half an hour himself. He went on gard with another candle-end, and advised me to draw my pistell and sleep with it cocked under my head. But I sed I never herd of such a dangerous thing as that being done, and kept my pistell reddy cocked near my

## The Human Boy

hand. I didn't fall off to sleep, as I expected, owing to anxiety as to our fate, but I shut my eyes and thort a good deal, and after my eyes had been shut some time I opened one a little and was gratefully surprised to see Bailey coming towards me stealthily. He had his pistell in his hand, and first I had a horrible thort he wanted to kill me, so that he mite have all our food and money; and then I felt sure he was coming to change pistells, so that he might have the one that went off. This made me get in a friteful wax with him, becorse I saw he was very unreliable and not reely as much of a chum as I had thort. So I waited untill I saw him stretch out his hand for my pistell, and then I leapt at his throat in a very ferocious way, that much surprized him. I also sed "Hell!" like the keeper had.

It must have been a solumn site by the lite of the candle-end when we began to fight tooth-and-nail for the pistell which could go off. We were both desperet, and it was reelly a battle to deside which should be the leeder of the enterprise and which should be merely the gang. Then, while we

## The Buckeneers

wresled and straned every nerve, a curious thing happened, for we fell against the candle-end, stuck on the top of a stick, and the candle-end fell against the side of the hut, and the hut, being made of wood, with walls of dried heather, was very inflameable and cort fire almost immediately.

And then Bailey sed we must aggree to settle our dispute later on and fli at once. So we each took our own pistell, and were just going to leave the scene, when, to our grate horror, we herd voices, and among them the voices of Browne and Mainwaring, who were, of corse, house-masters at Merivale.

Exhorsted though we were, me and Bailey made a terrible effort to escape, and I think we mite have done so even then, but, owing to the moon and two other men who were with Mainwaring, we could not reach an impennetrable part of the wood, and finally Mainwaring cort me, and a man cort Bailey, and they dragged us into the light of the blazing ruins of the hut, and we found out that Browne and Mainwaring had come after us, like beestly blood-hounds, and had

## The Human Boy

met the keeper, who told them he had been fired upon, and then the unfortunate burning of the hut had directed their steps towards us. And it's a lesson in a way, showing what risks it is for buckeneers to fall out among themselves at kritikal moments.

Of corse we had to walk back merely as prisoners of Mainwaring, but Bailey told me not to answer questions and rather let them cut our tongues out than know the truth. So they didn't get anything out of us, and when we got back, at two o'clock in the morning, Dunston was up to meet us; and by that time, what with cold and bruises and the failure of the skeem, I wasn't equal to defying Dunston, and merely sed we wanted to change our corse of life for something different, and had started to do so. And I also sed that burning the hut was an axcident which might have happened to anybody. And Bailey sed the same.

Then Doctor Dunston sent for the matron, and we had brandy-and-water and a hot bath, which was very refreshing to me, but Bailey sed biterly when he was in it that he

## The Buckeneers

had thought that morning never to have had a bath again. He also sed we should be put in sepperate bedrooms that night, and that if either of us got an opportunety to eskape, it was his duty to reskue the other. But I sed I didn't want to eskape, being fritefully sleepy and exhorsted, and I sed that if he eskaped he needn't trubble to reskue me, becorse if I returned again to being a buckeneer it certinnly wouldn't be with him.

I didn't see any more of him until next day; then we were taken in like prisinnners of war before the school, and Doctor Dunston lektured upon us as if we were beests of pray, and he sed that a corse of falty literatuer was to blame for our running away, and sed that the school liberary must be reformed. But he never knew the grate truth, becorse he sed we were onley running away to sea becorse of the fascenation of the ocean to the British karacter, when reely it was to be buckeneers and the terror of the Mediteranan.

Maine showed us all the points we had done wrong afterwards, and he sed the way

## The Human Boy

we had fought for the best pistell was very interesting to him and a grate warning not to trust in your fellow-creetures. And, after he had lecktured upon us, Doctor Dunston flogged me and Bailey in publick, which showed the stuff we were made of, becorse, though Bailey gets very red when flogged, he has never been known to shedd a tear; and I get very white, curiously enuff; but I have never been known to shedd a tear either.

**THE END**









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